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Wednesday, 13 September 2000, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Holkeri ..... (Finland)

The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

Agenda item 9 *(continued)*

General debate

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Tonino Picula, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Croatia.

Mr. Picula (Croatia): Year after year, we gather under this universal roof to join our minds and resources in order to make the world a safer and more prosperous place — or, at least, one a little less burdened with all the troubles we have been trying to resolve for decades but have so far not succeeded in eradicating. Never before have we assembled in such numbers and extent in the span of just a few weeks — first the religious leaders, then the Parliamentarians, then the heads of State and Government and, finally, the representatives to the General Assembly at its fifty-fifth session. Let us hope that this unprecedented congregation will not remain just a tribute to the dawn of the twenty-first century, but will emerge as a foundation for a better United Nations and a better world it has to serve.

When our heads of State met at the Millennium Summit earlier this month, they unanimously agreed on the importance of the United Nations for our common future. To say that the United Nations is the only Organization that brings together all the countries of the world would be stating the obvious, but we must never underestimate the simple fact that this is the only global Organization with universal membership and comprehensive scope that indeed belongs to all of us — to all the peoples of the world. This is where the ultimate strength of the United Nations lies. Unfortunately, we have too often failed to recognize this.

Some haunting facts should not be forgotten: the fact that 1 billion people in this world of ours live on less than $1 a day; the fact that 1 billion people do not have access to clean water; the fact that the last time the number of Security Council members was expanded was nearly four decades ago, at a time when the overall United Nations membership was almost half of its current size.

The United Nations must amount to more than a resolution or a decision, a plenary meeting or informal consultations. We all have to work together, to spare no effort to make the Organization more proficient, more effective and fully at the disposal of all its Member States. That is why Croatia welcomes the millennium report of the Secretary-General and shares his views on the need for action to adapt the functioning of the Organization to the challenges of the new century. There is a growing need and plenty of room for improvement along the lines of efficiency, transparency, equality and good governance. There is no room for excuses or for delaying reforms any further. The time for reform is now.

Croatia has been an active Member of the Organization since its international recognition as a sovereign State in the early 1990s. At that time, in spite

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of all our activities, Croatia was primarily the object of numerous peacekeeping operations and endless debates within the Security Council. Today, Croatia is a major generator of peace and stability in South-East Europe, an active promoter and facilitator of democracy in the region, a reliable partner and a member of numerous regional organizations and initiatives. We have not forgotten the difficult years when Croatia was on the receiving end of United Nations activities. Today, we stand ready to put our expertise gained in peacekeeping and other fields to the service of peace and democracy.

The experience of the homeland war, as well as the lessons learned during peacekeeping operations in Croatia, have served us well in Croatia's active engagement in the United Nations peacekeeping mission in Sierra Leone. We are ready to expand our role in peacekeeping and to actively participate in its conceptual development. Croatia welcomes and will carefully study the recently published report of the Secretary-General on the reform of peace operations and the recommendations proposed.

Unfortunately, the number of incidents with tragic consequences involving members of peace missions all over the world is constantly increasing. Just few days ago, three members of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Atambua in West Timor were brutally killed. One of them was Pero Šimundža, a citizen of Croatia. I would like to use this opportunity to pay tribute to him personally and to all peacekeepers whose tireless efforts cost them their lives in performing their noble tasks in the line of duty.

Croatia is currently a member of the Economic and Social Council, the central body of the United Nations. The increasing development of the Council as a forum for policy dialogue, together with its follow-up dimension of the major world conferences, adds important value to its work and puts a heavy workload on its members.

Croatia's international responsibilities start with those towards the region of South-East Europe. At the January elections, citizens of Croatia demonstrated their strong commitment to democratic values, respect for human and minority rights, the rule of law and economic reforms. They opted for broad changes that will bring them into the mainstream of the European integration processes.

The new Croatian Government is well aware of all the responsibilities it has undertaken and all the opportunities that are arising. We firmly believe that Croatia's leading role as a contributor to peace and security in the region of South-East Europe will considerably contribute to turning this part of Europe into an area of peace and prosperity.

In February, the Croatian Government adopted a programme that, as its primary goals, stresses democratic values, respect for human and minority rights, the return of refugees and displaced persons, good-neighbourly relations and integration into the European Union and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. The new Government is determined to fulfil all Croatia's ongoing international commitments and to assume new ones, if the need arises.

The elections in Croatia at the beginning of this year resulted in important changes. They provided for an increased level of human rights protection and media freedom, as well as the acceleration of the return process. Important legislative revisions in the field of the return of refugees have opened the door for the unimpeded return of all Croatian citizens, regardless of their ethnicity and without condition of reciprocity. All the citizens of Croatia stand equal before the law in terms of the reconstruction of their houses and all other return-related rights. The Government of Croatia will do its best to fully implement those laws.

Croatia is mindful of the fact that the return of refugees represents a necessary prerequisite for lasting stability in the region. In order to accelerate the process of return, the Croatian Government, in cooperation with UNHCR, has prepared a special return project for 16,500 persons, tailored to their needs. The necessary arrangements for the return of refugees to both Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina are to be made through central institutions of Bosnia and Herzegovina, in line with the new Croatian policy towards that country. Additionally, to speed up the process of two-way return with Republika Srpska, the former Prime Minister of the Republika Srpska and I have signed a joint declaration on the facilitation of the return of refugees. Through this document, we have committed ourselves to enabling the return of 2,000 people from each side, as well as to exchanging information and adjusting procedures in that regard. I can proudly say that real progress in the return process has been achieved.

At the same time, I have to stress that the number of returns to Croatia by far exceeds the number of returns of Croats to Bosnia and Herzegovina. Additional efforts have to be invested to speed up the return process of Croats and all others to Bosnia and Herzegovina. All the refugees have the right to return, but they also have a right to stay in the areas where they presently reside. For all those Bosnian Croats who wish to stay in Croatia, we have to provide appropriate help in finding new housing facilities.

The success of the return of refugees does not depend solely on political and legal parameters. It has to be accompanied by the development of the State economy and the local economy. The return process must be sustained by job opportunities, small- and medium-size enterprises, strengthening of the social fabric and adequate schools and health institutions, as well as better living conditions generally. Otherwise, we shall just turn returnees into economic migrants and they will be on the road once again.

Not a small part of legislative changes relates to the protection of human and minority rights in Croatia. The Croatian Government is of the opinion that the necessary preconditions have been met for excluding Croatia from the omnibus resolutions on the situation of human rights in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Republic of Croatia and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, which have been adopted by both the General Assembly and the Commission on Human Rights, and for the exclusion of Croatia from the mandate of the Special Rapporteur derived from the Commission's resolution.

Important recognition of the progress Croatia has made in respecting fundamental values of democracy, human rights and rule of law came recently from the Council of Europe. The Monitoring Committee of its Parliamentary Assembly concluded last Friday that Croatia has honoured its obligations and most of its commitments undertaken at the time of its accession to the Council of Europe in 1996. Consequently, we expect that the monitoring procedure will be formally closed at the plenary session of the Parliamentary Assembly, at the end of this month.

For the Croatian Government, cooperation with the International Tribunal in The Hague remains primarily a legal issue, not a political one. The Croatian State Parliament adopted the Declaration on Cooperation with the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) in April, unambiguously affirming its support for the Tribunal, and this important document remains a framework for Croatia's policy towards the ICTY. It is our firm position that the guilt for the crimes committed must be individualized: no nation can be held collectively responsible for the crimes committed by war criminals claiming to act in its name. In order to improve the quality of cooperation with the ICTY, the Government Council for cooperation with the ICTY has been constituted and close working relations with the Tribunal established.

Promotion of good relations with its neighbours is Croatia's high-priority goal. In its programme, the Croatian Government clearly stipulated that its relations with Bosnia and Herzegovina are based on good-neighbourliness, equality and transparency. Croatia will continue to cooperate with Bosnia and Herzegovina and the international community in the implementation of the Dayton Agreement, which remains the foundation of Bosnia and Herzegovina's self-sustainability and the guarantee of the preservation of the national interests of its three constituent peoples. Croatia's policy towards Bosnia and Herzegovina rests on full respect for the independence and sovereignty of that country.

Croatia sees this as the only way to a prosperous future for the Croatian people in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the care for whom remains our constitutional obligation. Croatia will continue to support Croats in Bosnia and Herzegovina, but it foresees doing this in a transparent way, in accordance with the Dayton Agreement and with a clear Euro-Atlantic orientation.

Transparent financing of the Croatian component of the Federation Army through the Standing Committee on Military Matters is only one of the steps aimed at enhancing the central institutions and concrete proof of the new Croatian policy towards Croats in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The relations between Croatia and Serbia cannot be regarded outside the framework of the international isolation of the Milosević regime. Croatia is not questioning at all the need to continue the normalization process with the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, but its dynamics and substance will depend on the democratization of Serbia, which remains one of the necessary conditions for international and

economic stability in the region. Croatia hopes that the forthcoming elections in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia will be conducted in a democratic way that reflects the true will of the people and that they will result in democratic changes. Bearing in mind the fact that the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe has been denied an opportunity to monitor the elections means that the elections could lose their international credibility. Still, Croatia wants to believe that Serbia will find a way to end the present situation and join the mainstream of the political and economic integration process in the region and Europe as a whole.

Croatia supports democratic developments in the Yugoslav Republic of Montenegro. An open, democratic, multi-ethnic, stable and economically viable Montenegro is in the interest of Croatia and of the region at large. In the course of this year a number of meetings have been held between the Croatian and Montenegrin officials at various levels, including the highest level. Two border crossings between Croatia and Montenegro are operating without impediment, and further steps for enhanced cooperation, especially economic ones, are under way. Croatia will continue to support the process of democratization that has already began in Montenegro and help in its opening towards Europe, firmly in line with the efforts of the international community.

Croatia remains seriously concerned about the present situation in Kosovo and continued violence, whose victims are both Albanians and the Serbs. We hope that efforts of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) forces and civilian administration will be successful in bringing peace and stability to the region, as well as facilitating preconditions for the return of refugees.

One issue, however, stands out in regard to the stability and lasting security of the whole region. It is the question of succession of States created after the dissolution of the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

An important aspect of the succession problem is the question of membership of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in the United Nations and other international organizations. The four successor States are of the opinion that this must be resolved in line with the already existing Security Council and General Assembly resolutions. That means that the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia cannot automatically continue the membership of the former State in the United Nations, and therefore, that it should do what other successor States have done — apply for membership as the fifth successor. Moreover, the four successor States are of the opinion that the current practice in the United Nations should reflect the above-mentioned resolutions and be more consistent in that regard. Therefore, we call for immediate implementation of those resolutions and emphasize once again the importance of resolving the question of succession, despite the rejection by the present Federal Republic of Yugoslavia regime.

There are still a small number of United Nations military observers within the international borders of Croatia. Their performance in Prevlaka, the southernmost part of my country, has considerably contributed to the lasting solution to this problem, which is definitely one of security, not one of a territorial nature. Since 1992, Croatia has accepted the United Nations mandate on Prevlaka, with the last six-month extension on 15 July this year. The steady normalization of relations between Croatia and the democratic Government of Montenegro has considerably improved the situation on the ground and should serve as a bedrock for a lasting solution for Prevlaka. In approaching the Prevlaka issue one has to respect existing international borders, as well as legitimate security concerns, land ownership rights and the need for economic cooperation and development in the region.

The stability of South-East Europe is an inseparable part of the overall European stability architecture. Being at the same time a Central European, Mediterranean, Danubian and South-East European country, Croatia plays an active role in several regional initiatives that serve as a foundation for stabilization, cooperation and development in our part of the world. Let me mention in this regard the Central European Initiative, one of the oldest regional initiatives, and the Adriatic-Ionian Initiative, the newest.

During its chairmanship of the Working Community of the Danube Region this year, Croatia will host the traditional Conference of the heads of the regional Governments as well as the Economic and Cultural Forum. Alpe Adria is another subregional initiative in which Croatia plays an active role. Croatia's role as an active observer in the South-East

Europe Cooperation Initiative additionally emphasizes our intention to contribute to regional security and stability.

From the very outset, Croatia has actively engaged in the creation and implementation of the Stability Pact for South-Eastern Europe. This strategic process represents a comprehensive approach towards the region in which the concept of stability includes democratization and human rights, economic development and security issues. Croatia has presented several project proposals to all three working tables of the Stability Pact, the construction of the Adriatic-Ionian highway being the most important of them. The construction of this highway, stretching along the coastline from the Italian to the Greek border, would mean a significant improvement in road travel between the countries of the region, and would also bring economic development to the very part of the region that most dearly needs it.

I have the satisfaction of informing the Assembly that at the beginning of this week Croatia hosted the parliamentary summit of the Stability Pact, which had complete success in strengthening the important parliamentary dimensions of the Pact.

The Stability Pact also serves as a mechanism for facilitating the European Union (EU) and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) membership prospects for all those countries of South-East Europe that wish to pursue this path. Croatia is one of them. Full integration into the EU and NATO is the priority strategic objective of Croatian foreign policy.

In a brief span of six months Croatia's international position regarding the European Union has thoroughly changed. It has gone from being a country with no institutional relations with the European Union to a country awaiting the start of negotiations on a stabilization and association agreement and, consequently, candidacy for EU membership. Croatia is very pleased with the results of the joint consultative task force, whose recommendations helped us to prepare the start of the negotiations on the stabilization and association agreement. We are encouraged by the European Commission high representative's statements that this generation of agreements will be tailored according to the present needs and achievements of the stabilization and association process countries, and that countries' further progress towards European Union membership will be assessed on their individual merits.

In late November Croatia will host a summit of the European Union member States and the stabilization and association process countries — Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Macedonia. We feel privileged to host such a historic meeting, one that will signify the importance that the European Union attaches to the region within the framework of the Union's enlargement process. At the top of the Zagreb summit's agenda will be the issue of opening EU prospects to the region and the countries of South-East Europe. This is firmly in line with the policy of creating one Europe without walls or curtains of division. We see the arrival of the EU heads of State or Government to Zagreb as a tribute to Croatia's democratic achievements and a harbinger of our status of country associated with the European Union.

In May Croatia entered the Partnership for Peace. This provided Croatia with an opportunity to contribute more actively to the peace and security of the region and to strengthen its democracy and stability at the same time. In parallel, Croatia has begun the substantial reconstruction and modernization of its armed forces, aiming to meet all NATO requirements as well as democratic standards.

Croatia continues its active engagement in the pivotal European organizations, such as the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the Council of Europe. It has achieved significant progress in working together with the OSCE on the improvement of security in the Danubian region through the engagement of OSCE civilian police monitors there, as well as in other fields of cooperation, such as the improvement of democratic standards in Croatia.

World peace does not depend solely on peace and security in Europe. It is with concern that we look at the ongoing threat of new crises on the African continent, where tremendous amounts of human resources and money are feeding the war machines, instead of serving to fuel development. The cause of our special concern lies in the fact that many armed conflicts in Africa erupt encouraged by and with the participation of neighbouring countries, often using foreign mercenaries who sometimes come even from Eastern European countries. Croatia sees the implementation of the Non-Aligned Movement

principles, as well as of the principles of the Organization of African Unity and other, subregional organizations, as an important element in the political developments in that part of the world.

These organizations undertake commendable efforts in order to establish mechanisms for conflict prevention, as well as to find the ways to end the ongoing crises. These efforts include the establishment of their own peacekeeping forces. In this regard, Croatia welcomes the determination of the African countries to solve their problems regionally and with support from the United Nations.

The situation in the Middle East continues to shift between the brink of war and the brink of peace. The peace process between the Israeli and Palestinian sides must be maintained, and all of us should spare no effort to extend assistance and support to the accomplishment of this paramount task. From its own experience, Croatia is well aware of how important it is to strengthen the peace process through Security Council and General Assembly resolutions that are supportive of it, both in language and in political substance. Thus, Croatia advocates that forthcoming resolutions on the Middle East reflect all the aspects of the ongoing peace process, serving as an important impetus for its successful completion.

Croatia is a country highly contaminated by antipersonnel landmines, with about 1 million landmines scattered over many parts of its territory. Their presence poses serious obstacle to the economic development of the country, and even more so to the return of people to their homes. The mine-clearing process is under way, but it has to be intensified if real progress is to be seen anytime soon. Many of the ongoing activities are performed in cooperation with donor countries, to which we extend our sincere gratitude; but maximum efforts have to be made to eliminate this evil completely and for good. In this connection, Croatia calls for further international assistance so as to enable the unimpeded development of the country at large.

Let me briefly address the issue of the reform of the Security Council. Croatia holds the view that the present structure and functioning of the Security Council does not properly reflect the reality of international relations in the twenty-first century, or the need for universal democratization. We support increasing the number of permanent and non-permanent seats in the Council, taking into account equitable geographical distribution as well as contributions to the United Nations budget. However, reform must go beyond the sole issue of membership enlargement. The Council's methods of work should be made more transparent, in particular regarding informal consultations, which have proved to be anything but informal.

The subject of greatest concern is that, with the advent of globalization, the number of people that are marginalized and strongly affected by its negative effects is growing. Therefore, we have to minimize the negative impacts of globalization and, at the same time, make its benefits available to all.

The effects of globalization on the international economy are significant and call for enhanced cooperation through multilateral institutions. In addition to the efforts aimed at avoiding marginalization and at ensuring full integration into the world economy, the countries with economies in transition face challenges associated with privatization and structural and macroeconomic reforms. In the case of Croatia there is an additional challenge, that of the post-war recovery. In such circumstances, our pivotal goal is to consolidate economic recovery and create conditions for sound and sustainable economic and social development. Our overall economic programme and policy measures are designed to support further economic stability, with stable prices and low inflation, concurrent economic growth, a faster rate of employment and more exports.

To attract foreign investments that are so important for the ongoing process of development, a new Investment Law has been adopted. Constructive economic cooperation on bilateral, regional and global levels remains Croatia's firm goal. Croatia has recently signed the Protocol of Accession to the World Trade Organization (WTO) and, within a few months, once the process of ratification is completed, Croatia will become a full member of the WTO.

The challenges facing the Organization are numerous. Answers will have to be found for questions regarding how to renew the structure and mandates of the main United Nations bodies, how to ensure better management and mobilization of new resources, how to define new forms of partnership, both with the private sector and with non-governmental organizations, how to make cooperation more effective

and, above all, how to turn the United Nations into a result-based Organization. Croatia believes in the potentials of the United Nations and considers that it will be made truly efficient if we — the Member States — accept our responsibilities towards it.

Croatia is ready to work together with all international actors in searching for the right answers to the challenges that lie ahead. Stability and prosperity of the world will become possible only if we never stop looking for ways to improve them. Croatia will continue to use its best efforts to preserve the positive trends in its general achievements and to contribute to European and world stability.

In conclusion, allow me to congratulate Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab, the Foreign Minister of Namibia and the President of the fifty-fourth session of the Assembly, on his dedicated work and on the great skills with which he performed his demanding job. I would also like to congratulate Mr. Harri Holkeri, Foreign Minister of Finland, on his election as President of the fifty-fifth session and to wish him all success in his future work.

Finally, I would like to express the hope that this Millennium Assembly will result in new commitments that will bring progress in responding to the challenges of the new century.

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Belgium, His Excellency, Mr. Louis Michel.

Mr. Michel (Belgium) (*spoke in French*): Mr. President, I should first of all like to congratulate you on your election to the Presidency of the fifty-fifth session of the General Assembly. I wish you every success in this task which is both difficult and inspiring.

Allow me to include in this tribute the Secretary-General who has a crucial role in promoting international cooperation for peace, security, justice and development in the world.

I fully associate myself with the speech made by my French colleague, Mr. Hubert Vedrine, on behalf of the European Union. His declaration covered quite broadly European concerns regarding different regions of the world and the crises they continue to experience. Like my European colleagues, I will confine myself to repeating the encouragements of the European Union for the Israelis and Palestinians to seize this historic opportunity now within their reach to conclude a framework agreement in the coming weeks.

The new century is a blank page. It depends on us and on our Organization to provide the appropriate answers to the challenges inherited from the past century. The Heads of State and Government who gathered here for the Millennium Summit set forth the objectives that will mobilize our energy for the coming years. I will only mention three of our highest priorities.

First, world peace. This is the primary responsibility of the Security Council. It is therefore essential to bring the ongoing reforms to a successful conclusion and to improve the Council's legitimacy as well as its representative character. To adapt the Security Council to the evolution of the world is the primary condition for its ability to respond to our expectations. Belgium coordinates a group of ten small and medium-sized countries in the quest for constructive compromise formulas. Regarding the enlargement of the Security Council, the creation of ten new seats, five permanent and five non-permanent, with an equitable geographical distribution, seems to us to be a path worth exploring. As for the right of veto, we have put forward a number of concrete and moderate proposals seeking a voluntary and partial limitation to the right of veto. Such a reform, a balanced one along these lines and responding to the wishes of most Member States can, and should make significant progress in the months to come.

Secondly, the elimination of poverty and attainment of sustainable development. The globalization of the economy must proceed hand in hand with job creation and economic take-off in the poorest regions as well as with universally recognized social and environmental norms. There is no more denying that great inequalities, differences in development, the lack of good governance and disregard for human rights are factors which create instability, both within States and among States in their international relations.

Thirdly, the defence and promotion of democracy and human rights. For us this requires equal participation of men and women in public life and decision-making, as well as the fight against all forms of racism, intolerance, discrimination and xenophobia.

Serious violations of human rights and universal values must therefore never be allowed to go unpunished.

This also implies a permanent quest for the conditions, modalities and terms that underlie common human values. Democracy — and on this at least we should all agree — is much more than a statement of fact regarding an established balance of power or an arithmetic majority. It is a political morality that includes loyal electoral behaviour. It is respect for, and encouragement of the open expression of differing points of view. It is a frame of mind based on a lofty and optimistic conception of the human being.

I say this because, even at home in our old European democracies which one would consider safe and sheltered, we see reappearing the vile spectre of rejection of differences, exclusion and xenophobic or slanderous prejudice.

European parties are again raising and exalting what is most sordid and most barbarous in human nature. Saying nothing or resigning oneself to this fact is tantamount to trivializing the phenomenon and trivialization means corruption of the spirit.

I say this also because we must recognize that our political systems, in theory well equipped to withstand such assaults, unfortunately tend all too often to give in to the temptation to minimalize them under the specious invocation of so-called higher demands of realpolitik.

It is not my purpose here to allege some moral superiority but simply to remind ourselves that history always exacts a price when one refuses to learn from its lessons.

Belgium has participated over the past decade in numerous peacekeeping operations under the auspices of the United Nations, among others in Somalia, Rwanda and in the Balkans.

Reviewing these experiences, the Belgian Senate issued a detailed report in December 1997 containing recommendations that prefigure, to some extent, the recommendations contained in the Brahimi report. I will point out a few aspects on which there is complete convergence between the two reports.

First, United Nations forces must be prepared to confront the worst case scenario. The Blue Helmets must be trained, equipped and commanded for such an eventuality.

Secondly, these forces must have at their disposal all relevant information, as well as the capacity to analyse such information in terms of strategy and tactics, so they must be able to rely on an effective intelligence capability.

Thirdly, troop-contributing countries must be closely involved in the preparation of the mandates and in the management of operations. The Assembly will not be surprised to hear me plead for the recommendations formulated in the Brahimi report to receive wide support of all Member States. I hope that all actors concerned — the Member States, the Security Council and the Secretariat — prove their determination and their will to extend reforms to all levels and bodies of the Organization. I pledge the full support of the Belgian Government to Deputy Secretary-General Louise Fréchette, who is responsible for their implementation.

I would also like to point out that, in our opinion, the conclusions of the Brahimi report cannot be dissociated from other discussions to be held during the fifty-fifth session, specifically those on the revision of the scale of assessments for peacekeeping budgets. In this regard as well, Member States will have to keep an open mind in order to set up an equitable system of financial burden sharing that is adapted to the current shape of the world.

Another sensitive question manifests itself clearly in the light of recent experiences, namely the proper role of the United Nations in relation to regional organizations, and indeed even in relation to the initiatives of neighbouring States in a conflict zone. Lessons to be learned from the Yugoslav crisis are not the same as those that can be drawn from recent crises, particularly those in Africa. The goal in this regard is not to deny the merits of the regional approach. On the contrary, Belgium supports the creation of regional rapid reaction forces in the service of peacekeeping, as was underlined one week ago by our Prime Minister, Guy Verhofstadt, before this very body.

It has to do more with highlighting the fact that the merits of the regional approach clearly can never justify inaction on behalf of the international community or some sort of oratory diplomacy that passes off solving problems to regional bodies and organizations or to temporary coalitions. The Security Council, as the supreme authority in matters of peace and security, must be able to play its role, although it

should certainly be possible to refer some tasks to regional institutions most able to take action.

I would like to make one last observation regarding preventive diplomacy and peacekeeping. The arsenal at the disposal of the United Nations is not limited to sending troops. Other means are available and, moreover, have been used repeatedly during recent years. I am referring to sanctions, and in particular to economic sanctions. This type of coercive measure, if applied by the Security Council in accordance to the Charter, can indeed produce the results envisaged when their use is well targeted and limited in time or when they are inscribed in a realistic timeframe. But experience also shows that when they are applied indiscriminately or when they serve overtly ambitious political objectives, their effectiveness tends to decrease after a certain amount of time, and they may even produce results wholly opposite to the ones initially envisaged. It is increasingly rare for sanctions to be an useful instrument. Too often, they only penalize populations without reaching the targeted rulers, who often understand how to exploit the boomerang effect of such sanctions.

I would like to move now to a subject dear to my heart, Central Africa. During the past year, my country has expressed strongly its desire to be involved in, and to contribute to, the mobilization of the international community in support of the Lusaka peace process. It is essential that all Congolese parties engage resolutely and without preconditions in a dialogue, as they agreed to do in Lusaka. It is equally essential that our Organization and its Members who have the means to do so support the rapid deployment of the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC), even though some of the conditions and modalities of that operation may have to be reviewed in the light of the Brahimi report.

One thing is certain: without the presence of a peacekeeping force there will be no peace. Nor will there be peace, or even a permanent cessation of hostilities, without a dialogue between the Congolese parties. Both these questions are obviously linked. In order to overcome the current impasse it is essential to make progress where possible. It therefore seems to us that the problem should not be stated in terms of preconditions, order of events or priorities. In any event, the responsibility of the Security Council and the international community remain in place. Without a political leap by the parties to the conflict, and without the necessary material support of the international community, the peace process is doomed to fail.

In Burundi, where action by the countries of the region and the remarkable facilitation undertaken by former Presidents Nyerere and Mandela have started to yield promising yet still incomplete results, it is also time for our Organization and the principal donor countries to act to consolidate the gains achieved and to set the country once and for all on the path to peace and development. It is in this spirit that Belgium will participate actively in the meeting organized by the European Commission that is to be held in Brussels on 15 September to prepare for the donors' conference soon to be convened by France on the request of Nelson Mandela.

Regardless of how well-intentioned they may be, efforts in the cause of peace can sometimes be to little avail, given the greed and rivalries fuelled by the illegal exploitation of local resources. Resources attained in that way are financing wars, which themselves become a source of profit. The problem of the diamond trade in conflict areas is at the centre of this question. We know that war diamonds represent only a fraction of international trade, but these illegal revenues nevertheless contribute to destabilizing the situation, encourage the logic of war and spread corruption and anarchy. Belgium is active in the efforts to create a global system of verification. It is high time indeed to put in place a realistic and effective legal framework binding on everyone in order to regulate the trade in diamonds.

I would now like to speak about non-proliferation and disarmament. Last April, during the Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, Belgium intervened vigorously to express its concerns regarding a certain number of elements that could lead to the weakening or putting into question the very foundation of the non-proliferation regime negotiated in recent decades. We certainly welcome the conclusions of the Conference and the reflection that it triggered. That has led to a favourable climate for the implementation of the plan of action. That being said, numerous States still refuse to adhere to the Non-Proliferation Treaty, while others have not yet ratified the Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty.

We have followed closely, and with some concern, the debate in the United States on anti-ballistic defence. Belgium is not opposed in principle

to the idea of anti-missile defence. We are only stating that the political perception, the analysis of the threat and the means to counter it vary greatly from region to region. There is no unique or universal response, but what is essential is to make sure that an anti-missile system, whatever it may be, should contribute to general stability and to the consolidation of mutual confidence. In other words, the decisions will have to be taken not only on the basis of a strategic and technical analysis, but also on a consensual basis that builds upon the overall political and strategic balance.

We welcome the decision by the American Administration to postpone its decision on the launching of a programme. Besides the question of the feasibility of such a programme, its unilateral nature would have a negative impact on our common disarmament objectives. We now hope that this decision will encourage negotiations for a START III agreement between the United States and Russia. Rapid progress on a new, substantial reduction of strategic nuclear arms could in turn lead to breaking the impasse in negotiations for a fissile materials cut-off treaty at the Disarmament Commission in Geneva.

Belgium also welcomes heartily the adherence to date by 138 States to the Convention on the prohibition of anti-personnel mines. Further efforts have to be made in order to implement it and mobilize the necessary funding to eliminate these especially inhumane weapons forever.

I have dwelled mainly on peace and international security. I would like to turn to the two other subjects that Belgium considers a priority in the programme of action of the Millennium Summit. Without these priorities, our efforts in the field of security would be fruitless. I am referring to universal respect for human rights and worldwide development.

The protection of human rights is a leading feature of my country's foreign policy. Our participation in the Commission on Human Rights will enable us to further enlarge our initiatives and our political action. We will be able to act more directly in the fields where we have a particular interest, such as the fight against racism and xenophobia, and the rights of the child. Belgium was actively involved in the negotiation of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child aimed at sparing children as much as possible from the suffering and consequences of armed conflict. The signing of that Protocol on the occasion of the Millennium Summit, as well as our country's signature of the second Protocol, on sexual exploitation of children, are specific signs of our common will to reinforce the protection of the rights of the child.

I would like to reiterate my country's wish to see the death penalty permanently abolished all over the world. I also appeal to countries that are not in a position to do so at this time to adopt a moratorium as a transitional measure. We certainly cannot accept the death penalty still being implemented in cases of those who were minors at the time of the offence, pregnant women or the mentally ill.

We are following very closely the evolution of international law and jurisprudence aimed at condemning persons convicted of crimes against humanity. My country has been at the forefront of national legislation in this context and hopes that these measures can serve as a deterrent and an example for other States. We have just ratified the Statute of the International Criminal Court, and we are encouraging other States to do the same in support of this important commitment.

Let me say a few words on globalization and its problems. Globalization is the expression of an inevitable technological evolution. It makes little sense to condemn this evolution as a whole, for it is natural and has many positive effects, but we need to channel its dynamics towards real economic and social progress for the well-being of a larger number of people. But the globalization of the economy and trade cannot simply mean the renunciation of our political and institutional responsibilities. The risk is very real. We are already witnessing a form of abandonment of responsibilities in the case of Governments and Parliaments confronted by the gigantic challenges of globalization and the almost impossible task of dealing with them at the national level. In the absence of a really effective and recognized global authority, the dynamics of globalization could lead us into a political vacuum. There will be no new economic world order without a new political world order in which national democratic institutions, politically representative and accountable, can play a role. This is another challenge facing our Organization and its Member States. We will have to provide an answer in the new millennium.

The United Nations system is at the heart of the issue of globalization, whose effects are becoming

more and more evident. Questions have been raised; now it is time to find the answers. We are convinced that only the United Nations system, with all its spheres of activity, is in a position to harmonize global economic development with human development. Here, more than anywhere else, we realize that human beings, wherever they come from, share a high degree of common aspirations, as well as the same fears, the same needs and the same dreams. This belief has to guide us in all our actions, both here and at home.

The President: I now give the floor to Her Excellency Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, Minister for Foreign Affairs of South Africa.

Ms. Dlamini-Zuma (South Africa): Allow me to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your assumption of the stewardship of this historic Assembly and also to congratulate your predecessor, Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab, on his sterling guidance of the Assembly's work during the previous session.

The dawn of the new millennium offers us a unique opportunity to reflect on the successes and failures of the United Nations since its inception. It also provides us with an opportunity to dream about the future of humanity in the third millennium. The founders of the United Nations based the Charter on the assertion of human dignity, human rights and the equality of women and men and the aim of promoting better social standards. Indeed, billions of people today enjoy human rights and live in dignity, free from disease, ignorance and fear, enjoying the benefits of technology and scientific advances and able to take full advantage of the process of globalization. Equally, there are billions who are humiliated, degraded and stripped of their innate human dignity and worth by poverty, disease, ignorance, homelessness, hunger and wars.

This Assembly, following the very inspiring Millennium Summit, provides us with an opportunity to reflect on the wise words of the leaders of the world and on the Declaration they adopted. Global consensus has at last emerged and confirms that we live in one world and belong to the same human race; therefore, while each Government has the responsibility to take care of its citizens, we all have to work together for the good of humanity as a whole. This means that we have to create a people-centred world that is more caring, with a strong sense of solidarity, where we are all our brothers' and sisters' keepers, if I may borrow those words from the Bible.

There is also universal consensus now that while billions of people are being degraded and dehumanized by poverty, disease and hunger, there are indeed enough resources in the world to feed, educate and restore the dignity of all human beings and make this world a better place for all. It is therefore clear that the eradication of hunger and poverty should be the priority of all priorities and should be our collective responsibility.

There is also agreement that we have a collective responsibility in dealing with infectious diseases, such as malaria, tuberculosis and sexually transmitted diseases, especially HIV/AIDS. There is a need to mobilize material and human resources, provide better infrastructure, provide health education and ensure access to affordable medicine.

There is also consensus that Africa poses the biggest development challenge. The success or failure of the United Nations and of humankind as a whole in this century will be determined by their success in dealing with the African development challenge.

We would like to urge the United Nations, in partnership with the Organization of African Unity and regional organizations, to accelerate the work towards peace and stability in many of the countries of our continent, such as Sierra Leone, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Somalia, Angola, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Sudan and Burundi, so that these countries may take their rightful place in the continent, be seized with the needs of their people, promote development, produce and export goods and not be areas of perpetual suffering and war that result in their being the net exporters of refugees. We welcome the Brahimi report and are studying it, as it contains very serious suggestions about the future operations of the United Nations.

The United Nations, particularly the Security Council, is humanity's principal agent for collective security and it needs urgent reform so as to be able to live up to this solemn responsibility. The world has changed dramatically and continues to do so. It is imperative that the composition and role of the Security Council reflect that change and not remain obsolete. The Bretton Woods institutions are equally in need of urgent reform in order to discharge their mandate and respond to the new development

challenge. The World Trade Organization has to adapt its international trade rules so that they are equitable and fair and take account of global development challenges.

It is a source of great concern to the developing countries that, increasingly, decisions are taken outside the United Nations and other global structures by developed and rich countries when these decisions have a great impact on the poorer countries and directly affect the lives of billions of poor people. That is why a partnership between poor and rich countries and dialogue between North and South are so critical.

Nuclear weapons still constitute a threat to our planet. We have to pursue the path of universal disarmament and the destruction of all weapons of mass destruction.

The need to protect the environment has assumed greater importance and we can succeed only if we work together.

The self-determination of the people of East Timor, Western Sahara and Palestine must be a concern to all of us. To this end, we urge the United Nations to do all it can to expedite the processes in East Timor and Western Sahara. We commend the peace efforts in the Middle East and the role of the United States. We would like to pledge our support to the Palestinian and Israeli leaderships as they try to find creative solutions to their problems. They must be urged to take advantage of this unique historic moment, as it seems that a real possibility exists for a solution.

The equality of women and men still remains a subject of great concern. All we need to do is look around this Hall to realize how far we are from realizing the vision of the founding Members of the United Nations. Secondly, the feminization of poverty is a big problem. The marginalization of women, both in their countries and in the multilateral forums, means that our countries and organizations, including the United Nations, are functioning at half-capacity and are deprived of the unique qualities, energies and creativity that women would bring. In this context, I cannot forget the plight of Aung San Suu Kyi in Burma. She deserves active support from this gathering and the world.

The United Nations was founded in part to make sure that the monsters of fascism and racism should not rear their ugly heads again. Unfortunately, all over the world racism and xenophobia are on the increase. Some countries and regions are responding by developing a new fortress mentality, which does not help the situation. This should flash red warning lights to all of us and activate our utmost vigilance against the scourges of racism and xenophobia.

It is only when we turn our backs on racism, xenophobia and other forms of discrimination that we can succeed in building a caring world where we feel diminished by the suffering and hunger of other human beings. It was for this reason that we felt a sense of obligation and agreed to host the world racism Conference next year. Of course, our country and people experienced the most systematic, most brutal and most inhumane form of racism, which the United Nations declared a crime against humanity. We are happy to take our place in the fight against racism in our country and in the world. It is our fervent hope that the Conference will come up with a programme of action against racism, xenophobia and other forms of discrimination.

In conclusion, let us all put our collective will, courage and intellectual creativity together in shaping the dream of a better world; a world of solidarity; a world where no child should starve or die of preventable and curable diseases; a world where no child will be deprived of schooling; a world where children will not be sent to war; a world where no child can be a slave or be used as an object for trafficking; a world where children grow up as children and play with toys and do not have to be breadwinners or worry about where their next meal is going to come from; a world where women will enjoy all rights and where the eradication of poverty and war is our collective responsibility.

The dream for the new millennium is indeed realisable. If we act with courage and determination, we can turn the hopes of billions across the world into reality.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Yohei Kono, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan.

Mr. Kono (Japan) (*spoke in Japanese; English text furnished by the delegation*): First, I would like to extend my heartfelt congratulations to you, Sir, a former Prime Minister of the Republic of Finland, on your assumption of the office of President of the General Assembly at its fifty-fifth session.

I would also like to pay my respects to Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab, Foreign Minister of the Republic of Namibia, for all his efforts during his tenure as President of the General Assembly at its fifty-fourth session.

It is also my great pleasure to welcome the admission of Tuvalu as a new Member of the United Nations.

Before proceeding to my main topic, I would like to mention two important developments that took place in the international community in recent months. Concerning the situation on the Korean peninsula, the recent inter-Korean summit was indeed epoch-making and I strongly hope that this positive development will continue, advance in the future and lead to peace and stability in North-East Asia. With regard to the Middle East peace process, Japan is very much encouraged by the commitment of both parties to continuing their negotiations and, together with the international community, will strongly support the efforts of the parties to achieve a lasting peace in the region.

In order to ensure that the twenty-first century is truly a century of peace, it is of the greatest importance that the international community make united efforts to address the issues of disarmament and non-proliferation.

In 1945, Hiroshima and Nagasaki became the first two cities in human history to suffer indescribable nuclear devastation. That experience is the starting point of Japan's actions aimed at the realization of a world free of nuclear weapons. With succeeding generations in this half-century, the extremely shocking experiences of Hiroshima and Nagasaki might very well be pushed to the edge of our memory. In such circumstances, new signs of proliferation of nuclear weapons and missiles are arousing our concern. I believe, however, that engraving the tragic experiences of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in our minds is the first step toward the creation of a world free from the nuclear threat, which is one of the biggest challenges facing the United Nations. In light of such experiences, Japan has maintained the three non-nuclear principles as its fundamental national policy and has focused particular attention on nuclear issues. It will continue to stress the importance of this issue.

Since the Second World War, we have adopted as the basic ideas of our nation: democracy, commitment to peace and respect for fundamental human rights, which are enshrined in the Japanese Constitution. Moreover, under its basic policy of not becoming a military power, Japan has mobilized all its available resources for the prosperity of its people and achieved economic development. It hopes to utilize that experience and make a further contribution to the economic development and enhancement of the welfare of developing countries.

Throughout my political career, I have been deeply committed to nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation issues. A senior politician for whom I have great respect once told me with great fervour:

> "I hope that somebody among the peoples of the world will take the lead in advocating peace, and that all others will cooperate for that cause, so that the earth will avoid a crisis. I believe that Japan must play the role of that somebody."

These words have become my political credo, as well as the resolve of many Japanese people. When I was Foreign Minister in 1994, Japan submitted to the General Assembly for the first time a resolution entitled "Nuclear disarmament with a view to the ultimate elimination of nuclear weapons" (49/75 H), which gained the support of an overwhelming majority of Member States. Japan's support of the indefinite extension of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) in 1995 is attributed to the strong will of the Japanese people. I highly appreciate the final document adopted at the 2000 NPT Review Conference this spring, since it contains practical steps to be taken in the future in the fields of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, including an unequivocal undertaking to accomplish the total elimination of nuclear arsenals. I also appreciate the postponement by the United States Government of its decision to deploy a national missile defence, as a result of prudent consideration with an emphasis on further dialogue on this important issue. Japan hopes that this announcement will inspire a further deepening of the discussion on issues surrounding national missile defence. I hope other countries respond to this move by taking actions to avoid a vicious circle of an arms race and to create a beneficent circle toward nuclear disarmament. The international community must continue its efforts aimed at non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and demand that the nuclear weapon States further reduce their nuclear arsenals. This will definitely require a further reduction

by the United States and Russia in their nuclear weapons through the Strategic Arms Reduction Talks (START), as well as efforts by other nuclear weapon States, unilaterally or through their negotiations, to reduce their nuclear arsenals. I also believe that we must seriously consider what kind of practical paths we should take to realize a world free from the fear of nuclear weapons. A world free of nuclear weapons is not a dream; it is within our reach.

Mr. José Roberto Andino Salazar (El Salvador), Vice-President, took the Chair.

To that end Japan will submit to this session of the General Assembly a draft resolution on the elimination of nuclear weapons, which sets forth a path towards the realization of a world free of nuclear weapons, while ensuring the non-proliferation of weapons of mass-destruction. It does so through measures such as the early entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) and the immediate commencement and early conclusion of negotiations on the fissile material cut-off treaty, as well as the promotion of the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty III negotiations, and through further, deeper reductions at a later stage in nuclear arsenals, leading in the final stage to total elimination. Japan expects that this resolution will gain wide support from the international community.

Further, I would like to point out the importance of concluding negotiations on the protocol to the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) by the year 2001, and strengthening efforts to cope with missile proliferation.

Now I would like to discuss international efforts for conflict prevention. For the effective prevention of conflicts, it is important to employ various policy measures in a comprehensive and effective manner. As Secretary-General Kofi Annan advocates, it is incumbent upon the international community to nurture a "culture of prevention". The G-8 Miyazaki Initiatives for Conflict Prevention, which was drawn up at the G-8 Foreign Ministers meeting in Miyazaki, over which I presided, embodies this idea of a "culture of prevention".

On the issue of small arms and light weapons, in which Japan has been actively engaged, the G-8 countries made clear for the first time that they will not authorize the export of small arms if there is a clear risk that these might be used for repression or aggression against another country. I hope this achievement will lead to the success of next summer's United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. Moreover, at Japan's initiative, a fund relating to small arms was established at the United Nations this spring. The purpose of this fund is to extend assistance for the collection of small arms and the reintegration of ex-combatants into civilian society.

Under the G-8 Miyazaki Initiatives for Conflict Prevention, we will actively work to strengthen such development assistance that contributes to preventing the outbreak or recurrence of conflicts. For this purpose, Japan will promote its collaboration with non-governmental organizations by, for example, providing assistance for their emergency humanitarian activities and dispatching joint study missions for emergency rehabilitation.

In recent years, United Nations peacekeeping operations have had to be deployed more rapidly. Moreover, as the examples of Kosovo and East Timor have shown, peacekeeping operations are now required to carry out diverse mandates that include humanitarian assistance, emergency rehabilitation and even civil administration. To make possible the rapid and effective deployment of such peacekeeping operations, strengthening the Secretariat's functions as well as more, quick-response cooperation on the part of the international community are all the more important. Japan welcomes the report and recommendations by the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations established at the initiative of the Secretary-General.

The continued high toll in human life among United Nations personnel taking part in peacekeeping operations and humanitarian missions is a matter of profound concern. Recently there was an unforgivable militia attack on the local office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in West Timor. Measures must be taken to ensure the safety of United Nations personnel through close cooperation between the United Nations, the country concerned, and its neighbouring countries.

With regard to United Nations peace operations, Japan intends to continue to do its best, including personnel and financial contributions to peacekeeping operations and assistance for emergency rehabilitation, democratization and the establishment of legal

frameworks, as well as assistance to international organizations.

Poverty reduction is a high-priority issue for the leader of every country. Japan, consistently aware of the importance of this issue, has been providing more aid than any country in the world for nine consecutive years, since 1991. Henceforth, considering what would be most effective for the development of developing countries, Japan will continue to make active efforts on development issues in cooperation with those countries. It accordingly intends to contribute towards the success of the high-level international and intergovernmental event on financing for development expected to be held in 2001 under the aegis of the United Nations and others.

Moreover, it is extremely valuable that developing countries that have achieved certain levels of development put their own experience and know-how to use in providing assistance to other developing countries. Japan, in collaboration with the United Nations and other organizations, will strengthen its endeavours for South-South cooperation.

Concerning Africa, where poverty is an especially serious issue, Japan twice hosted the Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD) — in 1993 and 1998. It intends to continue to actively cooperate for African development through the TICAD process. Bearing in mind the possibility of also hosting a third such conference, Japan is considering holding a ministerial-level meeting before the end of fiscal year 2001, and would like to ask for the cooperation of the countries and organizations concerned.

In April Japan hosted the second Japan-South Pacific Forum summit meeting, at which it, together with small island States burdened with geographically disadvantageous conditions, put forward a common vision and a course for mid- and long-term cooperation. Moreover, this fall Japan will hold the first ministerial-level conference with the countries of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM). As for the issue of sustainable development in landlocked States, it is Japan's policy to extend active cooperation for the improvement and development of their transportation infrastructure, and other matters.

Regarding the debt problem of the heavily indebted poor countries, Japan has decided to contribute up to a total of $200 million to the Trust Fund of the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Debt (HIPC) Initiative of the World Bank. It will continue to make its utmost efforts for the speedy and effective implementation of the enhanced HIPC Initiative, for example, by extending technical assistance to heavily indebted poor countries as they prepare their poverty-reduction strategies.

As we enter the twenty-first century we are faced with various issues, such as conflicts, poverty, refugees, human rights violations, health, crime, terrorism and environmental degradation. Also we need to build communities in which the rights of women, children and various vulnerable members of society are protected, in which they can demonstrate their talents, and in which all people can live together. In addressing such issues, it is increasingly important from the viewpoint of securing the existence, life and dignity of each individual to strengthen efforts that place human beings at the centre. This is the concept of human security.

I would like first of all to touch upon the issue of infectious diseases, which are not only a threat to the life of the individual, but also a serious obstacle to development and nation-building. Japan will extend assistance to the efforts of developing countries to combat infectious diseases such as HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis. It will also actively support the activities of non-governmental organizations in developing countries working in this area.

Moreover, Japan believes that the development of a United Nations-centred legal framework for combating transnational organized crime and terrorism is urgently required.

Efforts to address global environmental issues are becoming increasingly important from the viewpoint of human security as well. Attaching greater importance to development assistance that takes the environment into consideration, Japan has allocated approximately 40 per cent of its official development assistance to environmental cooperation. The primary tasks at this moment on the environmental agenda are the success of the sixth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the entry into force no later than 2002 of the Kyoto Protocol on global warming issues.

Concerning the Rio+10 event to be held in 2002, Japan believes that an agenda looking to the future should be set, taking into account the debates on the

effective implementation of many international environmental conventions, as well as globalization and the technological innovations that have occurred since the Earth Summit in 1992. Mapping out strategies to implement more effectively the large number of environmental conventions concluded in recent years will also be important. Japan strongly supports holding the Rio+10 conference in Asia and welcomes Indonesia's candidacy to host the conference.

Further endeavours must be made to solve the problems confronting women, children and various vulnerable members of society. Japan highly appreciates efforts made in this regard by the United Nations, including its convening in June of the special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century". Furthermore, Japan will host the Second World Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children, and will advance its efforts for the protection of the rights of the child.

I have touched upon only a limited part of the efforts focusing upon human security. Japan has contributed more than 9 billion yen — well over $80 million — to the human security fund that was established at the United Nations last year, and in the near future intends to make a further contribution of approximately 10 billion yen — or roughly $100 million — to this fund. The fund has borne fruit in assisting efforts particularly in such areas as post-conflict emergency assistance and reconstruction, health and medical care, and basic education. To further develop and deepen the concept of human security and to study ways to strengthen efforts in this context, Japan intends to establish an international committee on human security, with the participation of leaders of opinion.

As I have stated, issues requiring action by the international community are becoming ever more diverse and complex. We must urgently strengthen the United Nations system to enable it to deal with these issues.

First of all, this requires, as a matter of urgency, that the Security Council be re-created as a body that reflects the tremendous changes in the international community. At the Millennium Summit held last week the representatives of approximately a hundred Member States referred to this issue in their speeches within the limited time. The Millennium Declaration, expressing the determination to intensify our efforts to achieve a comprehensive reform of the Security Council, reflects the overall views of the heads of State and Government of Member States. In particular, there is a need for reform that reflects the views of developing countries, which are playing an ever more important role in the international community, and that fosters the participation of those countries with the capability to contribute to the solution of various issues facing the developing countries.

I believe that both the representativeness and effectiveness of the Security Council can be enhanced through an expansion of both the permanent and non-permanent membership, and the inclusion of both developing and developed countries in the new permanent membership. Although we have already spent seven years discussing reform, during which relevant aspects of the issue have been exhaustively explored, we have yet to see the reform materialize. Even during the discussions, conflicts have broken out, and poverty is worsening in various parts of the world. I would like to emphasize that the time has come to seek a convergence of views among Member States on the concrete form of Security Council reform.

Today the maintenance of international peace and security requires action, not only in political and security areas, but also in economic, social and various other areas.

When the reform of the Security Council is realized, Japan would like to assume a greater responsibility as a permanent member of the Council, mobilizing its capabilities and its experiences in various areas, such as disarmament and non-proliferation, development and human security, and based upon the ideas which I have discussed today.

A prerequisite for the strengthening of United Nations functions is securing a sound financial base. In addition to streamlining as well as improving the efficiency and transparency of United Nations finances, achieving a balance in financial burden-sharing is especially important. Today's financial burden sharing cannot be considered to reflect the economic strength of respective countries or their positions and responsibilities within the United Nations. Japan would like to appeal for its urgent revision. I strongly hope that an agreement can be reached on a more equitable scale of assessments for the regular budget at this session, as an important step towards the establishment

of a more stable financial base. Moreover, I hope that the substantive discussions for peacekeeping operations budgets, which are rapidly increasing, will also be conducted during this session and that a more equitable scale of assessments for these budgets can be agreed.

As we welcome the twenty-first century, while respecting diversity, we must transcend the differences that arise out of our sense of belonging to an ethnic, religious or cultural group. The foundation for these endeavours is provided by international relationships based on universal values common to all humankind, such as democracy, human rights and freedom. The United Nations must play a central role in our efforts to construct such international relationships.

In order to achieve peace, we must engage in dialogue with each other in a spirit of tolerance, and join hands in tackling various challenges. At the United Nations this year is designated the "International Year for the Culture of Peace", and next year, 2001, is designated the "United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations". These designations and the implementation of related substantive activities reflect a growing recognition of this idea.

As globalization progresses and economy-oriented rationalism prevails, we should pay special attention to the task of raising awareness of cultural diversity, nurturing the special character of respective countries and regions, and preserving historical and cultural heritage. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) should play a central role in this regard. Every country should recognize the role of UNESCO, and join together in extending assistance to strengthen its activities.

I believe that this Millennium Assembly, which began with the Millennium Summit, should be an epochal starting point of meaningful progress in the twenty-first century, both in consolidating our efforts to tackle various challenges and in strengthening United Nations functions through Security Council and financial reform. Towards that end, I should like to conclude by underscoring once again the growing importance of cooperation among all Member States.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Amre Moussa, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Egypt.

Mr. Moussa (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): It is a great pleasure for me to convey through you, Sir, to the President of the General Assembly our sincere congratulations upon his election. I am confident that he will lead the work of this Millennium Assembly most ably.

I should also like to express our sincere appreciation to his predecessor, Mr. Gurirab, the Foreign Minister of Namibia, for his exceptional leadership of the fifty-fourth session.

May I also express our high esteem for the Secretary-General for his most efficient preparation for both the Millennium Summit and Assembly. We appreciate his efforts to maintain and promote the role of the Organization and to strengthen its effectiveness and credibility.

The convening of the Millennium Summit and Assembly is an important milestone in the international system and the future of the United Nations. The two occasions constitute a unique forum to review the state of the world and its developments and to take stock of the performance of the Organization so as to enable it to occupy its central place in the international system and hence lead the movement of change on the basis of a general consensus and a meeting of all minds.

The goal of the establishment of a stable and effective system of collective security through dialogue and cooperation in the context of international democracy has been one of the most important objectives of the United Nations and those of the international community. It is thus necessary to allow the United Nations to achieve its objectives by adapting its work to the current international variables that must take the United Nations seriously. This might very well be the thrust of the Secretary-General's report to the Millennium Assembly.

In our opinion, the first step down this road is to agree on a broad modern definition of collective security in the coming decades. Security in its most simple and realistic definition is based on three basic and organically linked rights, namely, the right to safety and stability and avoidance of the scourges of war, mass destruction and armed conflicts, the right to development and to a decent life free from poverty, destitution and want and the right to live in a healthy environment free from pollution, disease and negative social phenomena. A cursory glance at the state of those three rights would reveal that during the last decade of international transformations they have become exposed to new threats, while existing ones

have been exacerbated in a manner threatening grave repercussions.

After the end of the cold war and the end of tensions between the two super-Powers, international peace became exposed to a new kind of threat, the threat resulting from the disintegration of some States, the collapse of their national structures and the victimization of their people due to internal strife and negative foreign intervention.

Globalization, world market, the information and communications revolution and the emergence of new kinds of economic activities all hold the promise of unlimited progress, yet they carry with them the dangers of widening the development gap between the developed and developing world.

As for a healthy environment, whole continents are suffering from epidemics, environmental degradation, backwardness and the spread of ethnic wars as well as the increased tragedies of refugees.

Africa is the region most affected by that horrible triangle — armed civil conflicts, poverty and economic backwardness, degraded environment, natural disasters, deadly diseases and epidemics. There is a belt of tension encircling the continent and economic difficulties and problems continue. Africa has thus reached an untenable situation that requires immediate and firm attention in order to help it extricate itself from that quagmire.

I must reiterate in this regard that the African States, through the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and other groupings, are discharging their responsibilities as best they can. They are taking necessary measures and steps to place themselves on the right path towards a better future. Special mention should be made here of the OAU Mechanism for conflict resolution, the efforts to strengthen peacekeeping capabilities through subregional groupings and the establishment of common markets and economic groupings, such as the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). Our continent is moving towards a form of unity on the basis of the resolutions of the recent Lomé summit, which will be followed up at the upcoming Sirte summit.

An agreement was recently concluded in Arusha on the settlement of the Burundi conflict. A new President of Somalia, Mr. Abdi Kassim Salad Hassan, was elected after the constructive efforts of the Government of sisterly Djibouti. There are efforts under way in the Great Lakes region. All these examples prove Africa's ability to deal on its own with some of its problems. Yet it cannot be left alone without the support of the international community, particularly in the field of peacekeeping and peace-making. The United Nations must play its full role in that field.

Meeting the new challenges faced by the international community and achieving the goal of establishing an effective system of collective security for future generations require, as I mentioned earlier, improving the United Nations performance and adapting it to the demands of these goals. In his message to the Millennium Summit last week, President Mubarak stressed the need to pay special attention to the maintenance of international peace and to support efforts for development, poverty elimination and narrowing the widening gap between the rich and the poor in our world.

Allow me to address these priorities and to stress their linkage to a number of important subjects and necessary steps. First, there is an urgent need to strengthen and reform the United Nations in general. There is a similar need to reform and restructure the Security Council and to enhance its credibility. We are determined to continue our contribution to the current dialogue on a comprehensive and balanced package deal on the expansion of both the permanent and non-permanent membership of the Council. This would enable the Council to be more equitably representative. It would also reflect the overwhelming majority of the developing countries, members of the Organization.

We are fully committed to the positions of the Non-Aligned Movement and the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in this regard. We reiterate the need for expansion of the Council to be accompanied by reform of its working methods and a revision of the use of the veto power, with a view to rationalizing it.

I wish to stress here what I mentioned earlier — that Egypt has a long history of regional and international contributions. It plays a significant role on the African, Arab and Islamic levels, as well as in the Middle East and among the developing countries

and emerging economies. In addition, Egypt has made many contributions to support United Nations activities and achieve its objectives. It has also contributed to the Organization's peacekeeping operations. All this makes Egypt eminently eligible and qualified to shoulder the responsibilities of permanent membership in an expanded Security Council, within the framework suggested by the African heads of State and Government since 1997.

Second, there is an equally urgent need to restore the role of the General Assembly in the maintenance of peace, in accordance with the provisions of the Charter, especially when the Security Council fails to discharge its primary responsibility in this regard. This would ensure that any collective actions or measures enjoyed the international legitimacy represented by the Organization. There is a need to further develop United Nations peacekeeping operations and provide them with a rapid deployment capability. There is also a need for concerted efforts to increase the capacity of States, particularly African States, to participate in United Nations peacekeeping operations, or those of regional and subregional organizations which are mandated and financed by the United Nations. Egypt will address these important issues when the General Assembly considers the Brahimi report (A/55/305).

These considerations must be kept in mind when we address how to develop the conceptual and practical framework of peacemaking and peacekeeping. New ideas, such as humanitarian intervention and the preventive deployment of forces, have, since the last session, begun to gain currency. We have called, and continue to call, for discussion of those ideas with the highest degree of frankness and transparency. Those ideas impinge on the concept of sovereignty. Some tend to belittle the value and importance of sovereignty when the matter pertains to the sovereignty of others. Those very same States tend also to consider it sacrosanct and inviolable when the matter pertains to their own sovereignty.

Third, the sanctions regime, as one of the component parts of the measures taken within the current system of collective security, needs a thorough review. Sanctions cannot last indefinitely. They must not cause human suffering to tens of millions of people or result in massive and destructive harm to the economic infrastructures or social fabric of States. Sanctions must not lead to the creation of angry generations who will continue to be embittered by their suffering, even after these actions are lifted.

Fourth, there is a need to recognize the importance of continued, serious consideration of the question of disarmament, particularly nuclear disarmament, which is the most destructive and poses the greatest threats. The priority of nuclear disarmament must not be overshadowed by the increased attention paid to small arms, light weapons and anti-personnel landmines. This is not to say that we do not recognize the importance of these subjects or the need to deal with them comprehensively and appropriately. In this regard, we reaffirm Egypt's initiatives for the elimination of weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear weapons. We welcome the results of the sixth Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) in the field of nuclear disarmament in general. We welcome in particular the Conference's recognition of the specificity of the situation in the Middle East and its reaffirmation of the continued validity and importance of implementing the resolutions on the Middle East adopted by the NPT Review and Extension Conference in 1995.

Fifth, with the accelerated pace of globalization and trade liberalization, the gap between the rich and poor countries is widening in a manner that threatens grave dangers. The comparison between patterns of production and consumption and standards of living in the developing and developed worlds is both stark and shocking. Narrowing this gap and correcting this imbalance in the international structure is not merely a moral obligation, but is vital. An international partnership must be established to achieve this objective.

The call for social justice within States must be accompanied by a similar call for justice in sharing the benefits of progress, globalization, the information technology and communications revolution and trade liberalization among members of the international family in the North and the South alike. We truly need to give globalization a human face and an equilibrium that will enable it to contribute to bridging that gap.

United Nations literature is replete with studies on the problems of and obstacles to development and the elimination of poverty. This, however, is no longer sufficient. In several international conferences we have adopted plans and programmes of action containing

clear commitments to mobilize the financial resources necessary to implement them. Yet implementation has not been at the level of the commitments contained in those documents.

A few months ago we reviewed progress in the implementation of the recommendations of the international conferences on population, women and social development. But what were the results of these reviews? What are the ways needed to face the obstacles that have impeded progress and made the implementation of the recommendations of those conferences fall below our expectations?

We have adopted the objective of halving poverty in the world by 2015. What is the course charted for achieving this objective and what are the commitments made to mobilize the financial resources necessary for its achievement? What about the numerous programmes and initiatives for African development? Have their achievements been commensurate with the magnitude of the problems facing the continent? Is it not time for a clear commitment, going beyond the current initiatives, to lift the burden of foreign indebtedness that is crushing Africa? We need a genuine partnership between the North and the South. We need real and effective support by the donors and the international financial institutions to implement development efforts and attempts to eliminate poverty, not only as a moral value taking the form of freedom from want, as mentioned in the Secretary-General's report (A/54/2000), but also as a vital objective connected to the establishment of peace and stability.

Sixth, in the same vein, an attempt to place responsibility for achieving development and eliminating poverty solely or even primarily on the shoulders of developing countries is both dangerous and short-sighted, because it would undermine the concept of international cooperation, which is one of the cornerstones of the world system, and ignore the repercussions of the widening gap between the rich and the poor in our world. That gap is now 16 times as large as it was in the 1960s.

An attempt is also being made to link international cooperation and the North's support for the South with concepts and values that in themselves we support but whose new conditionality we reject. I am referring here to democracy, good governance and human rights. Questions of democratic transformation, improved governance and administration, increased transparency and accountability, and promoting respect for human rights cannot be dealt with in isolation from the questions of development, poverty and subsistence, for they too are vitally important subjects. Should not the call for democracy within States be matched by a similar call for democracy among States and international organizations? Should not the call for the rule of law be accompanied by a similar call for respect for international law, the sovereignty of States and the rights of peoples? Can good governance and administration be achieved in the absence of a parallel effort for the development of human resources and the capacity-building? Is it sufficient just to pay attention to the civil and political rights of people while ignoring their economic, social and cultural rights, foremost among which is the inalienable right to development?

Seventh, the success of the development efforts of the peoples of the world at this stage depends on their efficient use of the tools of the new age, particularly information technology. The technological revolution has led to a widening of the gap between those who have those tools and those who do not. Nevertheless, information and knowledge technologies are of such a nature as to enable them to contribute to narrowing the gaps between the countries of the world.

The attention Egypt pays to these global questions does not take away from the attention it gives to regional issues that are extremely sensitive. Among those questions, I would like to concentrate on the issues of peace in the Middle East and the situation in the Sudan, which are of the utmost importance to Egypt and, without a doubt, to many in the Arab world, Africa and the international community at large.

The Arab-Israeli conflict entails vital issues related to the lives of peoples and to the future of nations. Those include recognition of legitimate rights, sovereignty over national soil, the inalienable right to self-determination, the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by force and the right of all States to live peacefully within secure borders. All these issues are directly linked to international and regional peace and security.

The logic that must govern the peace process in the Middle East should not stem from the assumption that one is dealing with a permanent foe or opponent. It must aim instead at turning past animosity into good-neighbourliness and normal relations among the peoples and the States of the region. What is at stake is

the security of the region and the security and prosperity of future generations, and not short-term political considerations. We face a clear choice between either settling the issue in terms of real estate — in which one party demands metres, miles or tens of miles — thereby keeping alive the seeds of tension and conflict, or by seeking through clear political will to establish a just and lasting peace by which the rights of all parties are secured and their obligations are well defined through necessary international guarantees. The latter option must be based on international law, something that applies to the Israeli/Palestinian track and to the Syrian/Israeli track alike.

There is no doubt that the overwhelming majority of States, communities and individuals support the achievement of a just solution that does not favour one party at the expense of the other. Most people would opt for peace and justice and would prefer to look ahead to the future in a positive way. The overwhelming majority of the Palestinian and Israeli people also want peace, a peace that is clear and clean and not partial, distorted or absent — something that, at the end of the day, would be more of a headache than a concrete peace. In that regard, I would like to say that President Arafat and the Palestinian people face one of two choices: either no solution or a bad solution. This is a policy that will never garner support or appreciation or ever lead to a viable solution.

As to the so-called flexibility, which has been at the forefront of commentary lately, it should mean only flexibility within the realm of international law and not outside it. If we are talking about flexibility on Jerusalem, that cannot in any way mean accepting Israeli sovereignty over Al-Haram al-Sharif. It could instead mean arrangements for the new Palestinian State that would give it sovereignty over all its territories while respecting the holy sites and guaranteeing their protection and free access to them. That would assume that, as a full-fledged member of the international community, the sovereign Palestinian State would be in charge.

The peace process is but a few miles away from the finish line. We hope it will not take many long years for Syria and Palestine to travel those few miles. We also hope that the sponsors of the peace process will be wise and able enough to propose honest solutions to the parties in order to enable the honest broker to lead the negotiations to a certain conclusion. At this juncture, I would like to salute President Clinton's enthusiasm and tireless efforts in steering the peace process during an eleventh-hour attempt to find a lasting solution during his Administration.

In order to achieve that objective it is essential to uphold one guiding principle that cannot be circumvented, namely, full withdrawal from all Syrian and Palestinian territories, including East Jerusalem, in return for Israel's right to be integrated into the Middle East as a partner with equal rights to security, peace and cooperation. That is the essence of resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and of the principle of land for peace. Lasting peace and security can be established only on that basis. If Arab territories, or any part of those territories, remain under occupation or if any question is settled in a manner inconsistent with the principles of fairness and justice, it would create a time bomb that could explode at any time. The desired peace and security cannot be fully realized without the establishment of a full-fledged, independent Palestinian State.

The stability of peace and security in the Middle East is tied to the need for serious consideration of the question of armaments in the Middle East. Permanently defusing tensions calls for dealing with the problem of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their delivery vehicles. This will also contribute directly to the maintenance of international peace and security. Peace and stability in the Middle East will not be complete or lasting without the establishment of a comprehensive regional security system that ensures control over the quantity and quality of armaments in the region and establishes a zone free from weapons of mass destruction, in accordance with President Mubarak's initiative, which enjoys global understanding and support.

The Sudan is a State of unique character in regional relations. It is at once a major component of the Arab world and an integral part of the African community. Its stability is also vital for the security and stability of the Horn of Africa, the Red Sea and the Nile basin. The importance Egypt attaches to this brotherly country therefore stems not only from the fact that it is Egypt's strategic twin, but because it is a central factor to the security of a vast and vitally important region.

Many efforts have been made, and many initiatives have been presented, to achieve peace in the

Sudan, most of which were made in good faith. However, they all dealt with the situation from a single perspective, that of the southern Sudan against the north.

Consequently, Egypt and Libya saw the need to complement those efforts with a comprehensive programme aimed at achieving broad national reconciliation encompassing all the factions and all the parties. The objective is to create a new Sudan, where stability and harmony prevail within a basic framework of unity and territorial integrity, equality among its citizens, and consensual self-determination by all its citizens and component parts. This will bring comfort and reassurance to the Sudanese people and to all its neighbours.

The Egyptian-Libyan initiative has gone a long way towards bringing the parties closer. The coordination of this initiative with that of the Inter-Government Authority on Development (IGAD) is possible. Efforts will continue to ensure the convening of a conference on national reconciliation to achieve peace in that important country.

The achievement of peace in the Middle East, the Horn of Africa and in the continents of Asia and Africa as a whole is a necessary condition for world stability. The situation in Afghanistan, Kashmir, the Caucasus, Sri Lanka, the continued tragedy of Iraq, and the conflicts in Africa and their attendant social and economic problems all give rise to serious concerns about the new world order — about its credibility and effectiveness. We must act quickly in order to resolve these problems in a context of international legitimacy and within the framework of the United Nations.

Finally, amid all that, the United Nations stands as an expression of the will of the international community. The purposes and principles of its Charter are a guiding beacon. Let this Millennium Summit and Assembly be a new turning point that will put us on the right path towards a world of greater security, justice and stability, a world that builds upon the achievements of the twentieth century and closes the chapter on its grave errors.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I give the floor to Mr. Nguyen Dy Nien, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Viet Nam.

Mr. Nguyen Dy Nien (Viet Nam): I would like to convey our warm congratulations to Mr. Harri Holkeri on his election to the presidency of this fifty-fifth session of the General Assembly. I wish also to extend our greetings to Tuvalu as a new Member of the United Nations.

This year's session of the General Assembly is of special significance, as it is taking place right after the Millennium Summit. The Summit marked an important milestone for the United Nations in the discharge of the lofty responsibilities of the Organization and its Member States towards the future of humankind. The Millennium Declaration adopted by the Summit points out humanity's most pressing issues and the Organization's primary priorities and directions at the beginning of this new era. Thus the Millennium Declaration can be considered a new charter and platform of action of the United Nations.

The question now confronting the international community is how to translate the Millennium Declaration into reality. This session of the General Assembly must mark the beginning of a new awareness and determination, to be demonstrated by concrete results. Only by so doing can we further consolidate the confidence of the world's people in the work of the United Nations, the largest Organization on our planet.

The realization of the Millennium Declaration will be a long process, but not a simple one. It will require the strong determination and efforts of each country, the international community and the United Nations, especially since globalization is having negative effects, leading to the uneven distribution of opportunities and benefits at the expense of developing countries.

Poverty eradication and development must be accorded primary priority and supported so that we can achieve the targets set by the Millennium Summit, including the target to halve, by the year 2015, the current proportion of the world's poor people, endeavouring to make the right to development a reality for everyone. Among human rights, the right to development is of paramount importance. With poverty and without development, there can be no peace and stability, let alone human rights. On the other hand, the consolidation of international peace and security will help to create a stable, enabling environment for development and poverty eradication, in each country and each region, as well as throughout the world.

To achieve development and poverty eradication, the first decisive requirement is for countries to

enhance their efforts and adopt suitable policies and programmes aimed at making the fullest use of their resources and potential, while at the same time fully mobilizing and effectively utilizing resources from outside. The United Nations, for its part, should strengthen its capacity and direct the necessary resources necessary to support the poverty-eradication efforts of the Member States.

Another extremely important point is that the developed and industrialized countries, as well as economic centres, must further enhance their assistance to developing countries in their endeavour to achieve development and poverty eradication. That should include debt-relief and write-off measures and an increase in official development assistance to 0.7 per cent of gross domestic product, to which they have committed themselves.

The objectives set out in the Millennium Declaration have long been considered by Viet Nam as its primary policy priorities. For example, through our own determined efforts and with the assistance of the United Nations and other countries, we have reduced the poverty rate, according to Viet Nam's criteria, to 11 per cent in 2000 from 30 per cent in 1992. We hope that this support and assistance will be further enhanced to facilitate Viet Nam's consolidation of the achievements recorded.

In the final analysis, all of these issues are aimed at serving the human being. Human resources and cultural development are two closely related aspects within the overall programme of development and poverty eradication. They are therefore both the goal and the driving force of development. This is the lesson that we can draw from the experience of many decades. It needs to be given appropriate and close attention in the policies of all countries.

Those objectives have been reflected also in Vision 2020 of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) and in the Hanoi Programme of Action. They include the expansion of cooperation in South-East Asia and in East Asia and the building of development triangles and quadrangles crossing poor regions. Concrete examples include the promising initiatives of the East-West corridor for development and the proclamation of the first decade of the twenty-first century as the Decade of Greater Mekong Subregion Development Cooperation, a proclamation which is supported by the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP). Those programmes are fully compatible with the directives contained in the Millennium Declaration, and they should therefore be properly supported by the United Nations and by the international community. Viet Nam and ASEAN will also contribute to further advances along this path.

In many regions of the world, protracted conflicts continue, causing instability and hindering the efforts of those regions and the countries in them to eradicate poverty eradication and attain development. Viet Nam and ASEAN support the resolution of disputes by peaceful means, without interference or imposition, so as to improve and consolidate regional peace, and not to further complicate the situation and adversely affect the confidence of the peoples of the countries concerned in the endeavours of the international community. Our common responsibility is therefore to guarantee that there will no repetition of interference of the kind that occurred recently in violation of the United Nations Charter and to put an end to the embargoes that have imposed untold sufferings on the peoples of Cuba and Iraq.

Greater efforts should be made to further enhance disarmament, especially disarmament relating to nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction, and to curb the growing danger of a new arms race, including attempts to deploy new missile systems.

In South-East Asia and in East Asia, the ASEAN countries have been leading the effort to build a region of amity, cooperation and prosperity, free from nuclear weapons; to resolve outstanding issues in the region; to implement the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in South-East Asia and the Treaty on the South-East Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone; and to promote the ASEAN Regional Forum for dialogue and cooperation with other countries and organizations. In this field, confidence-building measures should be enhanced on the basis of strict respect for the principles of non-interference in the internal affairs of other States, and of the preservation of the national and cultural identity of each country and of each region as a whole. Viet Nam and ASEAN, bilaterally or through the Regional Forum, will further promote efforts to develop a regional code of conduct on the South China Sea between ASEAN and China. We fully support the 1992 ASEAN Declaration on principles for resolving

disputes in the South China Sea, and we welcome recent positive developments on the Korean peninsula.

In order to implement the new major directives of the Millennium Summit and to follow up the momentum created by it, the General Assembly should, at this session, further enhance the process of reforming, revitalizing and democratizing the United Nations. Viet Nam supports the restoration and strengthening of the central position of the General Assembly, an organ that represents all Member States on the basis of sovereign equality. The reform of the United Nations — and most important, the reform of the structure, composition and decision-making process of the Security Council — is the responsibility of all Member States.

Reform of the Security Council should be based on the principles of the United Nations Charter. It should ensure increased representativeness, democracy and equitable geographical distribution, through which developing countries will be represented appropriately and will participate fully in the Council's decisions on important matters of world peace and security. Viet Nam supports expansion in both categories of Council membership, permanent and non-permanent. Regarding the increase in the permanent membership, the general package to be agreed upon should ensure that developing countries from the three continents of Asia, Africa and Latin America are represented; and it may also take into account the inclusion of some developing countries that can play a significant role and of certain developed countries that have made major financial and material contributions to the United Nations. Such countries would include India, Japan and Germany.

Now more than ever before, the United Nations must ensure that it can demonstrate the ability to reform itself and move forward with tangible steps. We need to act, and to ensure that the reform reflects the abundant vitality of the United Nations.

As it participates in this session, Viet Nam shares the common resolve to implement the historic Millennium Declaration to build a just and better world and a worthier and more effective United Nations. Fully aware of its responsibility as a Member State towards the United Nations and towards the international community, Viet Nam has for many years been making an effort to attain the common goals of mankind and of the United Nations, and it will continue to do so in the future. A very recent vivid example was the proposal put forward by the President of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam at the Millennium Summit, recommending that the first decade of the twenty-first century be proclaimed a decade of the greatest efforts towards development and poverty eradication.

In its capacity as a Member of the United Nations and as Chairman of ASEAN, Viet Nam will do its utmost to contribute actively to the development of the United Nations in general and of ASEAN in particular, and to promote cooperation between Viet Nam and the United Nations as well as between ASEAN and the United Nations. We wish at the same time to develop close and effective cooperation with other Member States and with organizations of the United Nations.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to Her Excellency The Honourable Billie Miller, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade of Barbados.

Ms. Miller (Barbados): I join other delegations in congratulating Mr. Harri Holkeri of Finland on his election to preside over the proceedings of the fifty-fifth session of the General Assembly, and on Finland's able service as Co-Chairperson of the Millennium Summit. My delegation's appreciation is extended also to the outgoing President, the Foreign Minister of Namibia.

I take this opportunity also to express the distinct pleasure of the Government of Barbados at the fact that another member of the fraternity of small island developing States, Tuvalu, has recently taken its place at our table.

Five short years ago, the United Nations celebrated its fiftieth anniversary with a massive gathering of world leaders not much different from the event which engaged our attention for the better part of last week. Then as now, the report card was weighed; then as now, amid critical assessment of its deficiencies and calls for bold reform, the Organization's continued validity was ultimately recognized and its unique and inherently positive role in multilateral relations emphatically supported.

We hope that this time the Millennium Summit will have served as more than just a familiar echo reverberating, unchanged, at five-year intervals through these chambers, magnified among the myriad murmurs that linger from other occasions of

specialized summitry. For there is nothing inherently magical about the passing of a millennium, or a decade, or even a quinquennium. Indeed, the proliferation of "plus fives" in this place is enough to confound the entire fraternity of mathematicians and accountants. And none of us is totally confident that the final reckoning will leave us on the plus side of the ledger. On the contrary, it seems, sadly, that we have become consumed by the show, not the substance; the process, not the result; the plan, not the implementation.

In this, the last year of the second Christian millennium, as we review the progress of the peoples of the planet over the past century, we find that, on balance, humankind has not done very well. In many fundamental ways, the twentieth century has not lived up to the promises and expectations that an era marked by such far-reaching technological change and innovation should have produced. In contrast, it has ushered in a time of unprecedented violence and suffering, visited mainly upon innocent civilians by international and internal warfare fought with increasingly sophisticated and deadly weaponry.

The end of the ideological divide has not been followed by an era of peace and development, as we had all anticipated, but by a horrendous upsurge in genocidal, religious and ethnic conflicts. The threat of nuclear proliferation and biological warfare has only partially receded, and the scourges of terrorism, narco-trafficking and transnational crime continue to scar innocent lives and threaten democratic governance. While a few thousand souls live in obscene luxury, half of the world's population subsist on less than two dollars a day, and millions remain desperately poor, with no prospects of bequeathing a better life to their children. The new plague of the twentieth century, AIDS, continues its decimation, with disproportionate effects upon the poor in the developing world. In sum, our modern civilization has not evolved into a caring and enlightened species, but rather into one that has often abused the positive aspects of its heightened capacity and modernization to the detriment of humanity and of the earth.

We well know that the United Nations is not, and cannot be, the panacea for all the problems of the twenty-first century, but we are convinced that it can and should serve as a mechanism through which the Governments of the world, and their people, can work in common cause to find real solutions to the most pressing global problems and challenges. In our increasingly interdependent world, there is little chance of success for unilateral action. This applies equally to the Organization's mandates for the maintenance of international peace and security and those for the promotion of economic development and social progress.

Since the Organization's creation in 1945, the international landscape has changed considerably. Internecine and intra-territorial conflicts based on religious and ethnic differences have escalated, and the United Nations has seen its peacekeeping role used more in the last decade than ever before. At the same time, the effectiveness of that peacemaking and peacekeeping capacity has been called into question by international public opinion and Governments alike. We continue to expect miracles of the United Nations in ending the bloodshed in the most troubled corners of the world, but we seldom provide it with the tools, the financing and the appropriate mandate to allow for timely and decisive action. Without this support, United Nations peacekeeping efforts will remain reactive, and not preventive.

One of the most complex issues currently being debated in the context of an enhanced role for the international community in the maintenance of international peace and security is the clash between the opposing tenets of sovereignty and humanitarian intervention. My delegation believes that this is a matter of such fundamental importance that it requires in-depth discussion and the elaboration, by broad-based consensus, of clear new rules under international law. For while we do not believe that the international community can stand idly by in the face of massive and genocidal violations of the human rights of citizens by power-hungry tyrants, we must at the same time ensure that any international response to such situations is not influenced primarily by the national ambitions of third States.

Decisions must be based on clearly defined criteria, informed by an objective verification of the facts. Action must be confined to the saving of lives, not the overthrowing of Governments. Humanitarian intervention, however compelling the circumstances, must never be used as a guise for unwarranted interference in internal State governance.

The balance sheet for the twentieth century in the area of economic and social development is similarly mixed. While the United Nations, through its

specialized agencies and programmes, has made great strides in the fight against hunger, disease and deprivation, that progress has not been evenly distributed. The goal of the alleviation and ultimate eradication of poverty remains largely unfulfilled, with desperate consequences for the growing numbers of the world's population who live in extreme poverty. Structural adjustment, the errant compass of the so-called lost decade of the 1980s, has taken its heavy social toll. So, too, has the burden of debt, which, despite the promise of debt forgiveness for the least developed countries and special initiatives for the highly indebted poor countries, continues to constrain future economic prospects for a large number of developing countries. At the same time, the decline in official development assistance has had a direct impact on the most vulnerable sectors of society — I refer to women, children, the elderly and the infirm.

The Secretary-General has challenged the international community to set a target for the halving of the numbers of the population living in extreme poverty by 2015. For this to be achieved, there is an urgent need for a higher level of political will and a shared commitment to create the necessary social and economic framework to enable the poor and dispossessed to redirect their lives.

Education remains the most powerful tool for ensuring social progress and the betterment of living standards for the underprivileged. It is therefore one of the most disappointing truths of this closing century that the international community has failed in its collective endeavour to eradicate illiteracy, especially among children. Although in the developing world the adult literacy rate has increased by half, from 48 per cent in 1970 to 72 per cent in 1998, the information revolution now threatens to create a new category of functional illiterates. The eradication of illiteracy and the provision of at least primary basic schooling are eminently achievable goals.

As an engine of social mobility, education stands as the most important component in ensuring the success of an individual and of a society. It is the greatest social liberator and facilitator of peace and is one of the fundamental pillars supporting democracy, competitiveness and social stability.

The development of my country, Barbados, provides ample proof of how education can empower a people and foster upward mobility for each succeeding generation. Education has always been one of the highest priorities for the Government of Barbados and a major source of budget expenditure. We are one of the very few countries where access to education is free at point of delivery, mandatory up to 16 years of age and universal at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels. Currently, the Government of Barbados is embarked upon an ambitious programme within the schools known as EDUTECH 2000, which aims to ensure that every child is equipped to function successfully in the new information age.

As we approach the new century, the world faces probably one of the most disastrous threats to its sustainability, a threat which has ended the lives of an unimaginable number of persons, crippled the economies and threatened the productive workforce of southern Africa, and taken an increasing toll in Asia and in my own subregion, the Caribbean. I am referring to the pandemic of AIDS/HIV.

Current estimates indicate that there are over 33.4 million people worldwide who are now infected with the disease. In the Caribbean region alone, that figure numbers some 330,000, which is an astounding and frightening statistic to contemplate for a country like Barbados, with a population of 267,000 people. Our region has the highest prevalence per capita in the western hemisphere, and a prevalence second only to that of sub-Saharan Africa. It has been reported by the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) that, every day, there are 16,000 new HIV infections and that 95 per cent of all reported AIDS cases occur in the developing world.

The AIDS pandemic is, in our view, the gravest economic and social crisis facing the global community as we enter the twenty-first century. Many of our leaders and policy-makers are only now beginning to grasp the enormity of the problem and to fully appreciate the devastating impact which AIDS is having, and will continue to have, on the economic sustainability of every country, from the smallest, most undeveloped nation to the largest, most economically viable State, because AIDS is not only a human and a social tragedy — it is also an economic one. It attacks our present workforce not only in its productive, but also in its reproductive capacity, thus simultaneously decimating the economic potential of two generations. It is a sobering reality that AIDS is now the leading cause of death among young men in the Caribbean, and it is projected that the disease may cause a decline in

the region's gross domestic product by as much as 4 to 6 per cent over the next decade.

We cannot tackle this grave crisis solely on the basis of current strategies and financial flows. Containing the spread of AIDS and dealing with its economic impact is an immediate priority which will require a major commitment of human and financial resources. In this regard, I am pleased to note the serious attention now being given to the crisis by the World Health Organization (WHO), the World Bank and other international financial institutions. Just yesterday in Barbados, a major conference was convened under the auspices of the World Bank, UNAIDS, the Pan American Health Organization/WHO, the United Nations Development Programme, the Caribbean Community and the Canadian International Development Agency to bring together high-level Caribbean health, education, economic development and labour-policy makers to map out a new crisis strategy for the Caribbean region.

Barbados applauds the recommendations of the Secretary-General that the United Nations should adopt as an explicit goal the reduction of HIV-infection rates in persons 15 to 24 years of age by 25 per cent within the most affected countries before the year 2005 and by 25 per cent globally by 2010. The United Nations must make AIDS education and research a priority for the coming century. Determined leadership is needed to persuade Governments and international pharmaceutical companies that a partnership must be developed to combat the disease, both through research and through the provision of drugs at reasonable cost to those who are most in need.

The trafficking in and abuse of illegal drugs have paralysed the development of many of our societies. They have also eroded the productivity of the work force and led to social discord, violence and a conspicuous erosion of values and respect for the rule of law. The countries of the Caribbean have not remained untouched by this affliction, both as transhipment and, more recently, sadly, as consuming States.

In the fight against this menace, the United Nations Drug Control Programme (UNDCP) has played a crucial role and its subregional office in Barbados deserves special mention for its active support for our own efforts. In Barbados, UNDCP assistance has been invaluable in the establishment of the Integrated Drug Programme through our domestic National Council on Substance Abuse and also in facilitating our community outreach efforts. Of particular note too, has been its role in the establishment of an Anti-Money Laundering Authority in Barbados.

As a small island developing State, Barbados is very aware that the natural environment performs for us free basic services without which human beings could not survive. At the same time, certain industrial and technological advances have threatened the biodiversity of many of the small island developing States. Therefore, for ecological reasons and for reasons of sovereignty and sustainable development, Barbados, on behalf of the Association of Caribbean States, last year launched an initiative leading to the adoption of resolution 54/225 on promoting an integrated management approach to the Caribbean Sea area in the context of sustainable development. We are grateful for the recognition by the General Assembly of the efforts of the Caribbean to protect and preserve our most precious resource.

The functions of the Caribbean Sea are many and multi-layered. It is the source of our food, it is the main attraction which drives our tourism markets and it is our primary and most reliable link with the outside world. The destruction that would be caused if there were an accident involving nuclear waste or oil in our waters would be beyond catastrophic and it would take centuries for our environment to fully recover. We look forward to continued assistance from the international community in helping us to achieve the objectives of that resolution to maintain and protect this, our most vital natural resource. It remains the ultimate goal of the region to have the Caribbean Sea recognized as a special area within the context of sustainable development.

In this spirit, Barbados also welcomes the newly established United Nations Open-ended Informal Consultative Process on Ocean Affairs and intends to be an active participant in the consultative process. We welcome the efforts of the General Assembly to address the problems of over-exploitation of living marine resources and the degradation of the marine environment.

The collective efforts of our Governments to alleviate poverty and disease and to help our human capital to take full advantage of the opportunities for

economic and social advancement take place within the parameters of a challenging new international order. Naturally, I refer to the phenomenon of globalization.

Globalization is not entirely new. It has existed in various incarnations among trading nations throughout history. What makes the modern incarnation different, however, is the manner in which the accompanying information revolution is making possible the integration of trade, investment, finance, production and services across national boundaries. What also distinguishes it is the philosophy of multilateralism, which offers all countries, developed and developing, a say — at least in theory — in shaping the rules which will henceforth govern international economic transactions. Nor is globalization as a concept inherently negative. The precepts of expanding market access, trade liberalization, increased technological advancement and more efficient and effective mechanisms of manufacturing and agriculture are all positive elements. It is in the rigid application of these elements, however, and their application without regard to the social dimension of development, that distortions have arisen which threaten to widen further the income gap between the developed and the developing worlds. I reiterate that the true challenge of the new multilateralism will be to ensure that globalization does not become an instrument of oppression for the peoples of the developing world, but, rather, becomes a means of offering a better life to all of our peoples.

In our efforts to sensitize the developed world to the need for adequate transitional measures for developing countries and for recognition of the special vulnerabilities of small economies, Barbados has frequently pointed to the fact that our Caribbean countries are being asked to undertake in 10 years a process which was carried out by the advanced industrialized societies over a period of more than 40 years, spread over eight rounds of multilateral trade negotiations between 1947 and 1994. In this regard, we have emphasized that, however clinically sound a procedure might be, the compression of its application into too short a time period can often be a fatal therapy. One of the greatest essential inequalities of the contemporary global economy is that, while the developed world was allowed an extended period over which to properly phase in trade liberalization, to its benefit, smaller, less endowed societies with less scope to absorb the shocks of adjustment are expected to make a potentially beneficial adjustment over an incredibly short period of time. It would not have worked for the developed world; it will not now work for the developing, and is in fact the consideration which argues the case for longer phase-in periods to apply the changes in the global trading regime.

Barbados is not opposed to globalization. We have already indeed begun the process of restructuring our economy and repositioning our society to meet that challenge. But our efforts, we believe, must be met by a similar display of good faith on the part of the World Trade Organization, which must, as my Government has repeatedly stated, review, repair and reform itself, adopt an ideology that is developmental and embrace a developmental agenda that is progressive and balanced in its substance, its processes and its outcomes.

That display of good faith is also necessary in promoting constructive and mutually beneficial dialogue between the industrialized countries and their developing country partners on the crucial matter of the regulation of international financial centres in their jurisdictions. My country has spoken extensively in other forums about our serious concerns over the unilateral manner in which the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development has proceeded on its so-called harmful tax competition initiative, and on the real motives underlying this unfortunate move. The setting of international rules in the area of financial services cannot properly be done by a grouping of 29 countries to the exclusion of all other interested parties. In this age of enlightened multilateralism there is no place for the application of unilateral, extra-territorial solutions to international economic developments.

On balance, we must not allow our frustration at the many missed opportunities to obscure the fact that the twentieth century has produced much that is positive. As we look forward, in the words of the Prime Minister of Barbados, the Right Honourable Owen Arthur:

> "We face the prospect that the simultaneous operation of the enormous power of technological change, the dismantling of barriers to the movement of output, capital, ideas and skills, and the emergence of rules-based, consensus-driven institutions of global scope will create a new global society that is capable of affording development to all, and of putting the scourge of poverty behind us for ever. We will leave the

twentieth century and enter the twenty-first conscious of the dangers, but excited by the prospects."

The Acting President (El Salvador) (*spoke in Spanish*): I give the floor to Her Excellency Rosario Green, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Mexico.

Ms. Green (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): My country is pleased at the election of Mr. Harri Holkeri to preside over the work of the fifty-fifth session of the General Assembly. We are certain that, with his talent, ability and experience, the efforts of this extremely important Assembly session will be highly productive. My delegation would also like to extend its recognition to Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab for his outstanding work as President of the Assembly at the session that has just concluded.

Last Friday, during the Millennium Summit, the leader of the Mexican nation, Ernesto Zedillo, stated his personal commitment and that of the Mexican people to the values and principles that sustain the activities of our Organization. Today, through me, the Mexican Government renews its willingness to continue working and participating constructively to strengthen the United Nations, the reason for those historic meetings. We will do this guided by our traditional policy in the multilateral arena: by encouraging dialogue, consensus, and unrestricted respect for international law. We will do this convinced, as well, that we must make good use of this opportunity to give renewed impetus to the United Nations, so that it can progress in solving the challenges that we confront, and can fulfil the goal of building, in this new century, a safer, more just and equal world for all. As the President of Mexico stated, we will do it confident that we Mexicans have the necessary foundation to do our share in achieving the targets contained in the report of the Secretary-General and the Millennium Declaration.

My country is convinced that the practice of democracy is indispensable for the development of nations and to guarantee respect for individual freedoms. But we are also sure that democracy is sustained by the sovereign will of its citizens and is, therefore, a domestic process that cannot be imposed from the outside, although, without a doubt, it can and must be nourished by international dialogue between countries and by the cooperation that can be provided by the United Nations.

Mexico is also convinced that, just as the predominance of democracy within the membership of our Organization is imperative, it is essential that relations between nations follow democratic practices as well, and that these, in turn, be reflected in organizations such as the United Nations that we, the peoples of the world, have created to organize our coexistence.

Today we find ourselves with an extraordinary opportunity to advance in that direction: to cover further ground in the democratization of our Organization; to achieve a level of democratization that allows the United Nations to successfully fulfil the mission with which we entrusted it in San Francisco, the validity of which we seek to renew today, a level of democratization that reinforces the legitimacy of our Organization and invigorates its initiatives, a level of democratization that supports the domestic processes that many of our countries are undertaking and will consequently be enriched by them.

Mexico has stated on various occasions that strengthening the General Assembly, the international community's most representative universal forum, is indispensable to guarantee the full democratization of the United Nations. We have also asserted that it is necessary to modify the structure and operation of the Security Council, so that it can fully shoulder its responsibilities in the maintenance of peace and international security.

It is for this reason that my country has repeatedly proposed that we undertake a profound reform of the Security Council; a reform that is not limited to modifications of its composition; a reform that also considers the Council's working methods and decision-making process; a reform that allows that important organ of the United Nations to reflect the plurality and diversity of our Organization; a reform that takes into account the transformations of the political landscape in recent times; a reform that does not lead to the creation of new centres of power and privilege; a reform that regulates and limits the scope of the veto, avoiding its abuse or selective application; a reform that institutionalizes the relationship between the Security Council and the General Assembly so that their links, contacts and exchanges of information are clearly regulated; in short, a reform that guarantees that the Security Council's decisions have the legitimacy that can come only from the universal assent of the General Assembly.

Based precisely on this unwavering faith in the universality of international law, which Mexico fully shares, my country has engaged in its most important battles in this world Organization. Mexico has always been ready to participate in codifying international law, but we have continually insisted that progress along this path should involve all of the countries that make up the community of nations. This is the only guarantee for preserving legality and for ensuring cordial, constructive and mutually beneficial relations between all of us.

The humanitarian crises in Kosovo, East Timor and Sierra Leone, to refer to only a few recent cases, have made us reflect on the scope of and limits to current international law. These crises have made us see that it is imperative to find a balance between the urgent need to respond adequately to humanitarian emergencies and the need to respect the sovereign integrity of all States. These crises, in short, have alerted us to the need to transform ourselves into a true assembly that analyses and proposes new paths, and they have alerted us to what holds us back from becoming an authentic forum where different positions are heard and where answers that realistically reflect the possible consensuses are found.

We must therefore move forward and begin a process of further codifying our international law; a process based on the sovereign equality of States as a living reality, not just a theoretical principle; a process in which the weak and the strong, the rich and the poor, and the small and the large can express themselves openly. A process that clearly establishes the rules of the game. A process that enshrines democracy as the only way in which to reach truly legitimate agreements.

Because we believe in these democratic values, Mexico has always opposed the legitimization, in practice, of any type of interference, especially when it is based on unilateral decisions or the decisions of a small group of countries. To the contrary, we have reiterated that the United Nations must be provided with a modern political structure that permits it to confront the new challenges to international peace and security brought by the end of the cold war. For this reason, we have insisted on the need to begin, as soon as possible, a broad process of consultation; a process that is absolutely democratic; a process that allows for the discernment of the mood of our community of nations in order to respond correctly and in timely fashion to humanitarian crises without weakening the Organization by doing so.

I call upon the President of the General Assembly to formally begin, as soon as possible, this broad process of consultation that will allow us to reflect together on this issue of crucial importance for the United Nations.

Mexico stands ready to continue contributing to the ongoing process of codifying international law to which I have referred. We will do so with the same confidence with which, in recent years, we have adhered to a significant number of international instruments proposed by this, our most important world Organization. We will do so with the same will with which we Mexicans have committed ourselves to modifying our national legislation in order to comply with the obligations that derive from those instruments. Such is our trust in international law and its advancement.

With this trust, only a few days ago my country signed the Statute of the International Criminal Court, as well as the Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child. With this trust we ratified, this year, the Convention on the Status of Refugees and its Protocol, as well as the Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons.

With this trust, last week Mexico deposited its ratification instrument for the Kyoto Protocol. Some months ago, we did the same with regard to the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families.

With that same trust, Mexico continues its fight to achieve the total elimination of nuclear weapons and tests, and reiterates the call made last April, by the group of countries, including Mexico, that are part of the new agenda for disarmament initiative, for the nuclear Powers to commit themselves to the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals.

Future generations deserve a world free of nuclear weapons. They deserve a world that is also free from the uncontrolled manufacture and trafficking of conventional arms. They deserve, without a doubt, a world where anti-personnel landmines cease to claim thousands of innocent lives.

Our commitment to the protection and preservation of the human race extends also to

combating the pandemics of our time. Today, a fatal disease, AIDS, threatens to cut off the existence of millions of beings on the planet. This is why only two days ago, the women Secretaries and Ministers for Foreign Affairs of 13 countries sent a letter to the Secretary-General in support of his call to stop and reverse the spread of AIDS by 2015 and to provide special assistance to children orphaned by this scourge. I want to renew the appeal of our 13 nations to all the Members of the United Nations to support the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) and to resolutely launch the common efforts that are necessary to fight this global scourge.

As is well said in the report of the Secretary-General and in the Declaration of the Millennium Summit, the protection of our common environment, the fight against transnational organized crime, the promotion of human rights, attention to vulnerable individuals, including children, the fight for disarmament, and international aid to respond to the demands of the least developed countries — these are the foundation for allowing the people of the world to live not only free of fear and misery, but also with hope. These are also the challenges that our Organization and its Members must respond to, by consolidating an international architecture that is sustained by democracy and not by the concentration of power; an international architecture based on respect for international law, and not on unilateral decisions; an international architecture that encourages the universal character of our community and not selfish individualism; in short, an international architecture that emphasizes solidarity and cooperation as the values that give sustenance and permanence to the Organization.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Niels Helveg Petersen, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Denmark.

Mr. Petersen (Denmark): Allow me first to associate myself with the statement by my colleague, the French Minister for Foreign Affairs, on behalf of the European Union. May I also congratulate you, Mr. Vice-President, and through you, President Holkeri, on your election to preside over this millennium Assembly.

A few days ago, leaders from all over the world gathered at the Millennium Summit. They gathered to reaffirm their faith in the Charter and to give direction to the United Nations in the twenty-first century. The Charter remains as relevant as ever with its mandate to promote peace and security, create an international community based on the rule of law, uphold respect for human rights and promote social development.

The new millennium brings new challenges to the United Nations in an ever more globalized world.

Increased communication between countries and peoples reinforces the need for common norms of social and economic behaviour. The global United Nations conferences within the last decade bear witness to the value of the United Nations as a unique norm setting forum. The follow up conferences to the social Summit in Copenhagen and the Beijing Conference on Women are cases in point.

These United Nations summits have advanced our understanding of the interaction between peace, development and human rights. The United Nations process on financing for development offers an opportunity for renewed commitment and action. The relationship between social development and promotion of human rights is today recognized. The best preventive action against conflict and strife is to ensure sound economic and social development based on good governance, respect for human rights and protection of minorities.

An encouraging and innovative feature is the decision adopted by the Economic and Social Council in July to establish a permanent forum on indigenous issues thereby advancing the aspirations of indigenous peoples. The Danish Government and the home rule Government of Greenland welcome this recent development. We will actively support the work of the permanent forum.

I welcome the fact that the Security Council has shown increasing attention to humanitarian issues. The open meeting in the Council on Africa in January gave new prominence to the humanitarian challenges for this continent. In the past year, the Council has taken up issues as diverse as AIDS in Africa, protection of civilians in armed conflicts and children in armed conflict. These initiatives increase our awareness of the root causes of conflict.

The international community must shoulder its responsibility in relation to the AIDS epidemic in sub-Saharan Africa. The rapid spread of HIV/AIDS could seal the fate of more than 30 million Africans over the

next five years and epidemic undermines decades of development efforts and dissolves the social texture of nations. It could destabilize entire regions. The AIDS epidemic is not a local problem. It is a matter of security of global importance. Africa has enormous potential but millions continue to survive on less than one dollar a day.

The growing transfer of private capital rarely flows to the countries in Africa. We must do more to integrate Africa into the world economy. Trade opportunities must be improved. We must give free access to the markets of industrialized countries, as well as to products where African countries have a genuine competitive advantage.

The legal framework of the World Trade Organization (WTO) must take into account the special difficulties of developing countries. Trade-related technical assistance must be improved.

Peace and security, we know, are fundamental conditions for economic and social development. War, internal strife and political unrest have devastated large parts of Africa, causing untold human suffering and destruction. No one should expect easy solutions, but we must work together to prevent and resolve armed conflicts in Africa.

We witness an increased African effort in the field of peace and security. The international community must support this trend through our active involvement. We must assist in capacity-building by relevant African organizations, and by backing United Nations peacekeeping efforts. Africa itself must create the conditions for international involvement. We welcome the initiatives by the Security Council to create common ground for United Nations peacekeeping operations by inviting the parties involved to discussions and special sessions of the Council in New York.

Although the Camp David talks did not bring about an agreement in the Middle East, they represented a major step forward. They helped to narrow down differences on key issues. A breakthrough has never before seemed so close at hand. Time, however, is quickly running out. I urge the parties to seize this historic opportunity. I salute the political courage displayed by the Israeli and the Palestinian leadership in their efforts to achieve a durable solution. I welcome the recent decision by the Palestinian Central Council to defer the decision on the question of statehood in the interest of further negotiations.

Democracy is a peacemaker. Democracies are much less prone to violent conflicts. The Secretary-General recently called attention to what he called "fig leaf democracies". The fig leaf of elections does not by itself turn a dictatorship into a democracy. Elections can even lead to a backlash as frustrations rise and tensions turn into violence.

Denmark increasingly turns her efforts towards the prevention and management of violent conflicts in line with our comprehensive engagement in developing countries and active involvement in United Nations peacekeeping activities. We will strengthen this ability to react quickly and effectively.

We will also continue to support regional cooperation also when it comes to countering the uncontrolled spread of small arms. Landmines are substantial obstacles to development. Increased efforts by the United Nations, Governments and non-governmental organizations are necessary. Right now, new momentum is needed. The second meeting of States Parties to the Ottawa Convention provides an important opportunity.

Peace operations are no longer a question of merely keeping the warring parties apart or monitoring ceasefires. They are a comprehensive and complex undertaking involving disarmament, demobilization of combatants, supervision of elections, monitoring of human rights and training of local police among others. We must enable the United Nations to adapt to the new realities, do things better and avoid such failures as happened in Rwanda. I fully support the recommendations in the Brahimi Report on United Nations peace operations. We must provide stronger political and financial support to the Organization. I welcome the proposed shift towards the use of civilian police and the rule of law, as I welcome the focus on rapid deployment of military and civilian personnel. Police and judicial experts are indispensable to rebuilding the economy in civil society, and their work must be based on a solid peace-building strategy. Close cooperation between the United Nations and other international organizations is called for. We must establish a partnership between the United Nations and regional actors.

Last year the Secretary-General called upon Member States to pursue more effective policies to stop

organized mass murder and violations of human rights. I fully support this view. We cannot leave large groups of people unaided where national authorities do not live up to their responsibilities. Conflicts in Kosovo and East Timor raise serious questions with regard to some of the classic principles of international law, the principle of State sovereignty, the principle of respect for human rights and the principle of the non-use of force in international relations. On the one hand, we had a basic rule of international law incorporated into the United Nations Charter — that the use of force in international relations is prohibited unless authorized by the Security Council or in self-defence. On the other hand, many countries find that there is a political and moral obligation to act in the face of atrocities causing large-scale human suffering within another State.

There is no clear-cut solution to this dilemma. But surely no legal principle, including sovereignty, can be used as a shield to commit crimes against humanity and other serious violations of human rights. The Security Council has a moral obligation to act on behalf of the international community. We must remember that the United Nations was founded, in the words of the Charter, in order "to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights". Any intervention reflects a failure of prevention. As a last resort, the international community must have the ability to act in the face of organized mass murder or ethnic-cleansing, even if the Security Council is blocked. The challenge is to keep open the option of humanitarian intervention without Security Council authorization in extreme cases, but to do so without jeopardizing the international legal order.

We must ensure that the Security Council functions as effectively as possible. If not, the influence of the Council will be diminished. The permanent members of the Security Council should apply the right of veto only in matters of vital importance. Therefore, I reiterate my proposal to establish a procedural rule; a rule according to which a permanent member of the Security Council would have to state the reasons why it has decided to exercise its right of veto in a given situation. Furthermore, the Member State should state on which grounds it considers that matters of vital importance are at stake. I hope that this idea can be further developed and that it can gain broad support.

I have addressed new challenges and possibilities at the start of the new millennium. Let me end by reminding this Assembly that old challenges still need to be addressed. Weapons of mass destruction are a lethal legacy of the cold war. They need our continued attention. Certain States are still pursuing the acquisition of weapons of mass destruction and building a missile capacity. There is a need for further improvement of the international non-proliferation regimes. Peace, development and human rights have been the essentials in the work of the United Nations from the very beginning. They remain essential. The primary responsibility for a more peaceful, prosperous and just world rests with Governments, but the United Nations is here to help us. The Millennium Summit confirmed our common will to work together as truly united nations.

I cannot leave this Assembly without expressing my deep concern at the situation in Burma. The treatment of Mrs. Aung San Suu Kyi is a disgrace, and I call on the regime in Burma to immediately restore Mrs. Aung San Suu Kyi's freedom of speech, movement and communication.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Youssouf Ouedraogo, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Burkina Faso.

Mr. Ouedraogo (Burkina Faso) (*spoke in French*): Exactly one week ago, the Millennium Summit was held in this very Hall, in which more than 150 leaders, heads of State and Government took an active and interactive part.

This Summit, which my delegation wishes to salute once again, has played a great service in bringing together so many eminent personalities to truly take stock of the state of the world through a stark re-reading of the mission of and the basic strategic objectives assigned to the United Nations.

What more can be said? How can it be better said?

The conclusions arrived at by our leaders, which go to the very substance of the diverse and changing problems that undermine humanity, frame the items inscribed on the agenda of the fifty-fifth session. They also give us the opportunity to strike while the iron is hot and to embark immediately on their implementation where it is possible.

In that context, the general debate in progress is a real challenge; a challenge to stay the course, but also a challenge to our ability to get down to basics.

But before I go on, I wish to convey to the President, on behalf of my delegation, heartfelt warm congratulations on his election to the presidency of our Assembly. This election is a well-deserved tribute to him and his country, Finland, with which Burkina Faso enjoys an excellent relationship of friendship and cooperation.

My country is a Bureau member and we wish to assure the Bureau of our full willingness to cooperate with it.

Our congratulations also go to His Excellency Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Namibia, on the effectiveness of his guidance of the previous session of the General Assembly.

I also wish to renew Burkina Faso's appreciation and support for the work of the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, who guides the work of our world Organization with courage, lucidity and determination.

The waning millennium will no doubt forever be etched in the memory of humankind. Unfortunately, it will be etched in blood, as during it we witnessed, as virtually powerless bystanders, the rise of slavery, colonization and racial discrimination; the escalation of the most atrocious kinds of war; the ongoing degradation of the environment; and the deterioration of the terms of trade. But it will also be etched in gold, for we witnessed prodigious scientific and technological progress and economic and industrial growth, even though the structure for sharing their fruits was slow moving and unfair.

No continent more than Africa, no people more than Africans, bear more heavily today the stigma of the scourges they have suffered, which will for ever mark them, or of their sharing but little — if anything — of the benefits of progress. My delegation therefore believes that we should embrace that history together and in a spirit of solidarity, agree to be the living and collective memory of it and learn its lessons so that we may strengthen our capacity to solve with greater efficiency and equity the problems of security, peace, development and a better quality of life that make up the core of our priorities. Whether that involves resolving the smouldering or open conflicts that continue to decimate our populations and to force them to flee by the thousands into exile, or whether it entails looking for lasting solutions to the problems of underdevelopment, the unbearable debt burden, the AIDS pandemic, malaria or natural and environmental disasters, we must, whatever the cost continually go back to our sources and history.

I therefore make a solemn appeal to the conscience of the peoples of the United Nations to prevent hegemony and domination from being the hallmark of our Organization during the third millennium. That would be a betrayal of this history, and make our collective memory a selective memory.

As the Assembly is aware, despite the progress made during the second millennium, there still remain questions and concerns among developing countries, particularly those in Africa. Their questions and concerns are not caused solely by the acceleration and unprecedented worsening of their continued impoverishment. Unfortunately, they also stem from the fact that today, at the dawn of the twenty-first century, international relations continue to be based essentially on force. That sad fact is made worse because, with the end of the cold war, we are passively and almost with a resigned attitude witnessing a single mind-set developing.

As most heads of State and Government have said from this rostrum, the time has come to undertake the necessary reforms at the national, regional and international levels to build a more just, equitable, unified and fraternal world. Let us hope that the basic challenge, I would even call it heroism, of the new millennium will be to move forward together in solidarity, calmly and democratically towards globalization while we remain ourselves — that is, retain our intrinsic values and our dignity as free individuals.

With regard to the United Nations, we are convinced that making it more democratic is absolutely necessary. That democratization must include a thorough reform of the decision-making processes of the system, and of the Security Council in particular, and should go hand in hand with giving greater attention to development issues, particularly through a more thorough examination of the idea of a development council, as proposed by the Millennium Summit. It also means making the Organization truly universal. In this regard, Burkina Faso welcomes the admission of Tuvalu as the 189th Member State. We also think it is unfair to continue to marginalize the Republic of China, a country that meets all the requirements of a sovereign State to take its place in the United Nations.

Throughout its history, and particularly since the 1990s, Burkina Faso, learning from its own experience — experience grounded in a culture of dialogue and negotiation — has based its contribution on the quest for solutions to national and subregional conflicts on the basis of dialogue and agreement. We have done so because we are convinced that dialogue and agreement — which are certainly not the weapons of the weak — are the only way to reach lasting peace.

We are therefore very surprised and disappointed that for some time now my country has been forced to confront accusations and all sorts of completely baseless recriminations. Is this the result of a deliberate desire to harm, or simply of misunderstanding? It is wrong and unfair that in efforts to find lasting solutions to conflicts one should yield to the easy temptation of accusation, recrimination, condemnation and exclusion. Burkina Faso has never hesitated to demonstrate its good faith, to show its willingness to cooperate with the United Nations and the international community, or to express its desire for transparency.

That is why we set up an inter-ministerial committee on Angola and Sierra Leone to follow up and monitor implementation of the sanctions decreed by the Security Council. We also invited the Council to undertake any investigations in Burkina Faso that it deemed necessary to find the truth. Two United Nations delegations therefore recently visited the country. Their leaders stated that they had accomplished their missions freely and peacefully.

Similarly, in the face of the recent surprising, to put it mildly, allegations by Guinea, we would like to reassure that beloved, fraternal country, as well as the international community, that Burkina Faso had no part, directly or indirectly, in those unfortunate events. We repeat our readiness to welcome or support any initiative that could shed light on this matter, which we find profoundly distressing.

At the national level, Burkina Faso is resolutely continuing to consolidate and anchor the democratic process begun in 1990. That process is essentially characterized by the regular and systematic holding of elections at the municipal, legislative and presidential levels, in objective, transparent and fair conditions recognized by the international community; the strengthening of public freedoms and the promotion of human rights; public financing of political parties, unions and an independent press; recognition of official status for the opposition; reform of the judicial system to allow it to play its full role in consolidating and regulating the rule of law; and strengthening decentralization and local governance.

Turning to the economy, our Government is concentrating on a truly unified type of development. Its priorities are poverty eradication, environmental protection, food self-sufficiency, and education and health for all.

We welcome the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Debt Initiative, which seeks to reduce the debt of poor, highly indebted countries, and the election of our country to that body, which strengthens our anti-poverty strategy.

At the African level, Burkina Faso has consistently worked to strengthen good-neighbourly relations and to promote subregional and regional integration as well as peace and security.

That is why we are committed to the institutional stability and the strengthening of the subregional cooperation or integration organizations of which we are a member, in particular the West African Economic and Monetary Union, the Economic Community of West African States and the Economic Community of Sahel-Saharan States. We hope that the latter will be accorded the status of observer at the United Nations.

For that reason we have spared no effort to help create the African Union, which the African peoples so fervently desired.

These are the main ideas that Burkina Faso wanted to share with the international community and which attest to our unswerving commitment to the ideals of the United Nations and to our unshakable faith in our common ability together to forge a better future — a glorious future for the whole of humankind.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Ahmed Ould Sid Ahmed, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania.

Mr. Ould Sid Ahmed (Mauritania) (*spoke in Arabic*): On behalf of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania, I should like to congratulate Mr. Harri Holkeri on his election to the presidency of the fifty-fifth session of the General Assembly. We are confident that his personal qualities and his extensive political and diplomatic experience are an excellent

guarantee of the success of this session. I should like to assure him of the full cooperation of our delegation in this lofty task.

I should like also to seize this opportunity to express our sincere thanks to his predecessor, Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab, for the outstanding way in which he guided the work of the previous session. I pay tribute also to the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan. We deeply appreciate his efforts to reform and restructure the Organization as well as to develop its methods of work and rationalize its role in all domains so that it meet the needs and challenges of today.

In this respect, we listened closely to the Secretary-General's presentation of his report on the work of the Organization. It is also my pleasure to welcome Tuvalu as a new Member of the Organization. We are prepared to cooperate fully with it in order to achieve the objectives of our Organization.

The reform and restructuring process of the United Nations bodies has become a necessity for the common interest. The conditions in which the United Nations was founded more than 50 years ago have changed, and major developments have taken place in all fields and at all levels, making it essential to review the methods of work and structure of the Organization.

For that reason, we support the expansion of the Security Council, in keeping with the principles of transparency and justice, so as to achieve equitable geographic representation and to reflect the universality of the Organization, in accordance with Article 24 of the Charter.

This session is being held at the dawn of the third millennium, at a time when the majority of humanity is living in conditions that prevent them from realizing their aspirations. Despite some encouraging indicators in some of the third-world countries, the general trend is towards a wider gap between the industrialized world and the developing one, which is facing major obstacles such as external debt, low prices for their commodities, and the difficulty of accessing world markets.

Our Organization should exert all possible efforts to alleviate the economic and social difficulties confronting the developing countries. It must help them accelerate their development in an effective manner by increasing official development assistance and by allowing more direct foreign investments into these countries and the opening of the markets of the developed countries to the products of developing ones, all of which will contribute to the establishment of a new world order based on consensus, cooperation and solidarity among all States.

The problem of debt must also benefit from the attention and the interest of the international community, because it is an obstacle to the economies of the developing countries. In this respect, my country hopes that the initiative undertaken to alleviate the debt of highly indebted and poor countries will contribute to the solution of this problem.

The world today is facing numerous problems and challenges, the effects of which are not contained by national boundaries. They jeopardize international security and undermine the achievements registered in all fields. Thus it is our duty to work relentlessly to resolve these problems. They include, to give but a few examples, terrorism, poverty and violations of human rights.

In this respect, my country wishes to reaffirm its condemnation of the phenomenon of terrorism, in whatever form and whatever its origin. We call for the reinforcement of cooperation and consultation at the international level in order to face this phenomenon with determination.

There is also a need to put in place policies and adopt measures to combat poverty, in order to ensure sustainable development. My country has created a commission entrusted with combating poverty and with implementing concrete programmes aimed at preparing our citizens to play a role in development. This commission is also responsible for guaranteeing the promotion of individual and collective rights.

In this context, I would like to recall the special session of the General Assembly on social development, held in Geneva last June, which reaffirmed and stressed once again the Programme of Action adopted at the World Summit for Social Development, held in Copenhagen in 1995.

We hope that the outcome of that special session will contribute to an improvement in the living conditions of all people and to the attainment of sustainable development by strengthening the links between social issues and development.

We express our satisfaction at the outcome of last June's special session of the General Assembly,

"Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century", and we hope it will enhance the role played by women in all spheres.

The foreign policy of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania is founded on good-neighbourly relations, peaceful coexistence and strengthening regional and international cooperation. In line with those principles, my country attaches great importance to consolidating stability and eliminating the causes of conflict and tension that can threaten international peace and security and hamper development in many regions of the world.

Turning to the Middle East, my country, while reaffirming its support for the peace process, considers that a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the region can come about only on the basis of the Madrid agreements, the principle of land for peace, and the full implementation of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) to ensure complete Israeli withdrawal from the occupied Palestinian territories and from the Syrian Golan and the restoration to the Palestinian people of their legitimate national rights, foremost among them the right of self-determination and the right to the establishment of an independent State with the holy city of Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital. This requires us to intensify our efforts to overcome the obstacles to peace in the region, a region that so sorely needs a chance to realize its potential and to turn a new page in the history of its peoples. In that context, we note with satisfaction the Israeli withdrawal from southern Lebanon.

We hope that efforts to bring stability and understanding to the Gulf region will be successful. My country reaffirms its respect for and adherence to international legitimacy, and reiterates its rejection of anything that could impinge on the independence or territorial integrity of Kuwait, as well as its rejection of any measure that would threaten the unity or territorial integrity of Iraq. We call for an end to the embargo imposed against the Iraqi people, who have suffered immensely from that embargo; it is children, women and the elderly who have suffered most.

On the question of the Arab Maghreb, my country is working staunchly and resolutely in cooperation with our sister countries in the Arab Maghreb Union to strengthen cooperation and consultation to realize the aspirations of the people of that region.

On Western Sahara, my country reaffirms its readiness to make every effort to promote the implementation of the United Nations settlement plan for that conflict.

Turning to developments in the Lockerbie crisis, we wish to express our satisfaction at the progress towards a comprehensive settlement, including the suspension of the embargo imposed on Libya. We welcome the success of the diplomatic approach, and we hope that this problem will be resolved once and for all.

We are concerned about the ongoing conflict in Somalia, and we hope that our Somali brothers will agree to engage in constructive dialogue in a spirit of responsibility and patriotism with a view to a peaceful settlement and to restoring unity and national sovereignty to the country so that it can once more enjoy stability and a climate of conciliation.

We regret the continuing tension in Sierra Leone, and hope that ongoing efforts will bear fruit, so that that country, which for nine years has been suffering in a destructive war, can once again enjoy stability and a climate of conciliation.

On the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, we reaffirm our support for the Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement, which in our view is the only acceptable framework for a peaceful, comprehensive and lasting solution.

With respect to Angola, my delegation reaffirms its full support for Security Council resolutions 864 (1993), 1127 (1997) and 1173 (1998), and calls upon UNITA to fulfil its commitments under the Lusaka Protocol so that peace and security may return to that country.

Turning to the conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea, we express our satisfaction at the ceasefire achieved thanks to the efforts of President Abelaziz Bouteflika of our sister country the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria. We hope that the negotiations between the parties will result in a final solution to that conflict.

On Kosovo, my country expresses its satisfaction at the positive developments towards ending the violence, restoring confidence and rebuilding the country after many years of war.

The United Nations was established to attain the common purposes of all mankind, notably international peace, security and stability. The text of the Charter contains the provisions necessary to ensure a balance between the rights and the duties of all those wishing to serve the common interests of international society. That is why, at the dawn of the third millennium, we must spare no effort to ensure the maintenance of international peace and security.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Iaia Djaló, Minister for Foreign Affairs and the Communities of Guinea-Bissau.

Mr. Djaló (Guinea-Bissau) (*spoke in Portuguese; English text furnished by the delegation*): I wish at the outset to convey my warm congratulations to Mr. Harri Holkeri of Finland on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-fifth session and to reaffirm our confidence in his ability to guide our work at this session. The delegation of Guinea-Bissau, which it is my privilege to head, assures the President of its full cooperation. Our congratulations go also to his predecessor, Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab, who fulfilled his mandate in a constructive manner, thus making an important contribution to the work of the General Assembly.

We wish also to express our trust and appreciation to the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, and to thank him for the important steps that have been taken on his initiative towards substantive reform of the United Nations and towards bolstering the Organization's international credibility.

The universality of the United Nations gains whenever a new Member State is admitted. By joining the United Nations, Tuvalu has affirmed to the international community that it will shoulder responsibility for the full exercise of its sovereignty. Its accession to membership has reinforced the representative nature of this world forum.

In the third millennium, with our eyes focused on a new century, we are passing through a historic period in which new and significant events give rise to new hopes on the international scene.

This diagnosis, however, encompasses both hope and scepticism, for it shows that the transitional period we are living through involves factors of both integration and disaggregation.

If, on the one hand, the end of bipolarism that dominated international relations diminished ideological antagonisms, this new and unprecedented process, by undoing old political and strategic balances, is promoting democratic impulses, freeing the energy of States and creating space for a new international order more in line with our times.

On the other hand, the rise of nationalist aspirations, supported by the yearning for the right to free evolution, has had the effect of triggering old conflicts, some of them forgotten in time. This phenomenon has led to an exponential growth of conflicts that menaces the internal cohesion of States as well as international peace and security.

It was predicted, and legitimately so, that the international economy would be able to take advantage of the peace dividend resulting from the end of the arms race. It had been expected that those resources would be invested in the poorest countries and, thus, would have contributed to the acceleration of global economic growth and development. Our perception, however, is that, due to the present state of international economic relations, those optimistic expectations have not come to fruition.

As the international balance of power has changed, the relative position that placed different countries in the international, political and economic pecking order has also changed. The very nature of relations among States has also been transformed. However, the rules and practices giving structure to a new international order are yet to be defined. Our perception is that this is the main unresolved issue. This calls for the community of nations, through our common institutions, to work determinedly together in order to bring the present transition to a successful end.

To do so, it will be essential to empower the system of collective security embodied in the United Nations. In particular, we attach great importance to the revitalization of the General Assembly and the rationalization of its agenda. We also feel there is a need to reform the Security Council so that that organ, which has special responsibilities, will be able to fulfil its original mission and be reborn as the main political instrument for action in the United Nations.

Expectations without precedent devolve upon the United Nations. We should all strive to find a solution to the present structural and financial crises faced by the Organization. It will be necessary to reactivate its

dynamism in order to implement the "Agenda for Peace" and to make the "Agenda for Development" a reality.

It is widely known that Guinea-Bissau has just overcome the gravest crisis the country has experienced in its recent history. We are still convalescing from the terrible effects of an absurd and disastrous war. In addition to irreparable loss of life, Guinea-Bissau society was deeply traumatized by a conflict that almost destroyed the entire existing infrastructure. Guinea-Bissau was made more impoverished and more vulnerable. Its reconstruction, the foundations of which are fragile, will be very difficult, because even simple tasks have assumed urgent priority. The urgency and the sheer volume of the effort needed to rebuild the country go far beyond the limited possibilities of a Government that is near exhaustion. In order to succeed, that effort will need to be supplemented by the effective participation of every partner of Guinea-Bissau.

In this new period of the restoration of democratic legality, the people of Guinea-Bissau have elected their new Government within the framework of a pluralist democracy. The new National People's Assembly has approved a general programme of action, prepared by the Government, which defines a strategy for sustainable development aimed at implementing the priorities identified, in cooperation with Guinea-Bissau's partners. This programme of action and the project of building a new society, required by the evolution of the situation in Guinea-Bissau, have been set out by Guinea-Bissau's new President, who was freely elected by the people. Aware of the sacred responsibility incumbent upon him, President Kumba Yalá has committed himself to upholding the programme of action.

As on past occasions when we were beneficiaries of timely and precious solidarity extended by the international community, we are hopeful that the political, economic and social progress of Guinea-Bissau will be further supported and maintained.

Amilcar Cabral, the founder of our nation, considered himself and the other Guinea-Bissau freedom fighters to be combatants for the noble causes upheld by the United Nations. Today, after the heroic struggle that led to our independence, and thanks also to the support received from the international community and the United Nations, Guinea-Bissau is participating in the highest world diplomatic forums with serenity and determination, embarking on an unrelenting search to improve on the heritage of our forebears.

Therefore, acting with responsibility and specificity, Guinea-Bissau has undertaken its own initiatives, as well as presenting proposals aimed at the defence of its interests and at contributing to the advancement of the causes of peace and international cooperation. We recognize that in today's international situation, rife with conflicts and contradictions, the United Nations remains, without a doubt, the necessary forum for the development of the activities undertaken by our Government to affirm the international presence of Guinea-Bissau.

The five African Portuguese-speaking countries, joined with Brazil, Portugal and Timor Lorosae — the latter still being an observer — to form the Community of Portuguese-Speaking Countries. This Lusophone Community is characterized by solidarity and tolerance, based upon shared sentiments and perceptions rooted in a melding of cultures that expresses the experience of our respective peoples.

We would like to salute the development in the processes of democratization of Government structures that is now occurring in Sao Tome and Principe, Mozambique and Cape Verde, similar to what happened in Guinea-Bissau. This will allow our Governments to better respond to the legitimate aspirations of our peoples.

We wish to express our solidarity with the Angolan Government and people, which have experienced the nightmare of almost 40 years of war. We support the efforts in search of peace and national reconciliation. We strongly favour the implementation by the United Nations of the Lusaka Protocol and the full implementation of the sanctions established by the Security Council.

In our West African subregion, Guinea-Bissau has tried, and to a certain extent has attained, in terms of its will for integration, a political commitment aimed at improving our relations with neighbouring countries so as to promote the cause of peace. In this spirit, we recognize that in its essence the conflict of Casamance is an internal issue of Senegal. As such, we also perceive its negative consequences on the neighbouring States. Our country is ready to work in the search for a just solution to and peaceful resolution of that conflict.

We feel, however, that we are neither a part of the problem nor its source of origin. The constructive actions undertaken by Presidents Kumba Yalá of Guinea-Bissau and Wade of Senegal, with the support of President Jammeh of the Gambia, allow us to look with optimism to the future evolution of that issue.

We deeply deplore the tragedy that has befallen Sierra Leone, a country of our subregion. The increased violence in that country has resulted in a humanitarian disaster. We urge the belligerent factions and the Government of Sierra Leone to cooperate with the international community in order to find a definitive solution to that fratricidal conflict.

The situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and in the Great Lakes region continues to be a source of concern to Guinea-Bissau. It is necessary to summon the political will of the countries of the region to diminish the tension and to continue to search for a just solution.

The Lusaka accords are the result of the perseverance of the parties involved and should be implemented rapidly and comprehensively. They are the essential framework for the resolution of the conflict. We are convinced that the implementation of Security Council resolution 1291 (2000), which established the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, represents the road to peace.

In the Horn of Africa, Guinea-Bissau welcomes the acceptance by Ethiopia and Eritrea of the peace plan put forward by the Organization of African Unity. We encourage both parties to persist on the path of dialog and negotiation and to continue to cooperate with our continental organization.

In the immediate vicinity of our continent, the Middle East peace process is entering a decisive period. This process and the quest for equanimity should be accelerated in order to ensure a lasting and just peace that respects the inalienable right of the Palestinian people to an independent State of its own, as well as the right of all States of the region, including Israel, to national independence.

Far from the African continent, Guinea-Bissau continues to pay special attention to the issue of East Timor. We are linked to that territory by special historic and cultural bonds and we are therefore closely following the work of the United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor and the recent establishment of a transitional Government. We hope that the process will culminate in the full independence of Timor Lorosae and with its admission as a full Member of the United Nations.

Finally, we believe that the situations created by the imposition of embargoes against certain countries, in which sanctions affect the poorer sectors of the populations, particularly women and children, should be addressed through dialogue and negotiation with a view to finding a definitive solution.

In the age of globalization, we should not lose sight of the human being and its vital needs. If it is legitimate that all parties have the right to expect profit from progress, it is also correct that we should seek economic growth with social equity. Mankind faces many challenges, among which achieving comprehensive development is without doubt the most important, because the lack of development is the main source of the conflicts that lead to the crises afflicting our planet. Therefore, if we wish globalization to live up to its promise, we should learn better to work and to act together in order to correct its negative effects.

It is urgently necessary to give momentum to the North-South dialogue on the basis of equality and to develop a wide network of South-South cooperation with a view to minimizing the risks of globalization. That effort must be fully supported by the international community with a view to a true partnership for development. Such partnership, in our view, should enable us to find the modalities of a coherent international action to ensure sustainable economic growth in the context of true development.

The structural adjustment policies adopted by the majority of African countries are, per se, clear proof of their willingness to improve the management of their national economies. Nevertheless, in most cases, the response of our development partners has not been in line with the sacrifices demanded and the urgency of the problems identified. From our point of view, it is necessary to identify the mechanisms needed to promote a true social adjustment, keeping the human individual as its central point of reference.

In this context, the collective challenge we face is to stress a dynamic image of international solidarity, which may be translated into effective action for social and economic cooperation in favour of developing countries.

Our gathering here at the General Assembly represents the best opportunity to correct the imbalances that destabilize the global process. We need to muster the determination of all our countries in order to raise relations among States to the high level of dignity required by our shared future.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): We have heard the last speaker in the general debate for this meeting.

I shall now call on those representatives who wish to speak in exercise of the right of reply. May I remind members that, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 34/401, statements in exercise of the right of reply are limited to 10 minutes for the first intervention and to five minutes for the second and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Al-Humaimidi (Iraq) (*spoke in Arabic*): The statement made by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Kuwait to the General Assembly this morning contained a distortion of facts that requires a reply.

First of all, concerning the issue of those missing in action, the Kuwaiti Minister attempted to politicize the matter and to confine it exclusively to missing Kuwaitis. He claimed that the Iraqi Government refuses to participate in the meetings of the Tripartite Commission, whereas the facts of the matter are as follows.

First of all, the matter of the missing in action — be they Kuwaitis, Iraqis or of other nationalities — is a humanitarian issue that should not be exploited to cheap political ends, such as that of maintaining the embargo against the Iraqi people. While Kuwait has fewer than 600 persons missing in action, Iraq has more than 1,150, whose files are with the International Committee of the Red Cross. The Kuwaiti Government is expected to submit information concerning those missing persons. The Kuwaiti Government is called upon to put an end to the suffering of all the families that do not know the fate of their sons, regardless of their nationality, for human suffering knows no nationality.

Secondly, the work of the Tripartite Commission concerning missing persons is hampered by the United States of America and the United Kingdom, which insist on participating in its meetings despite the fact that they are not concerned with its work nor do they have any missing nationals whose fate they would be interested in learning about. However, the United States does have one missing person, a pilot whose plane was shot down over Iraqi territories during the aggression against Iraq in 1991. The United States has not asked that the case of this missing pilot be dealt with within the Tripartite Commission, but rather requested to deal with it on a bilateral level under the supervision of the International Committee of the Red Cross. Once again we wish to affirm that Iraq endeavours to have the Tripartite Commission meet as soon as possible with the participation of the parties that do have persons missing in action — Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Iraq — under the supervision of the International Committee of the Red Cross.

The Kuwaiti Minister claims that the Iraqi Government has not yet complied with the resolutions of the Security Council, neglecting the fact that Iraq has indeed complied with those resolutions, whereas his own Government has been violating those resolutions on a daily basis. All relevant United Nations resolutions have called for respect for the sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence of Iraq. Yet ever since 1992 scores of American and British planes have been taking off daily from bases in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia to bombard Iraqi civilian targets, in blatant violation United Nations resolutions, international law and humanitarian international law. We call upon Kuwait to end that aggressive attitude, which represents a serious threat to the security and stability of Iraq and the States of the region.

Thirdly, the Kuwaiti Minister claimed that Iraq's intentions towards Kuwait are not peaceful. But the facts do indicate that Kuwait's intentions and actions towards Iraq are aggressive. Kuwait chooses to ignore the facts of history and geography and the collective opinion of the international community, including the Arab States. More than one speaker has affirmed such an opinion, when the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the Arab States have asked in this very Assembly that the sanctions against Iraq be lifted in order to alleviate the suffering of the Iraqi people. Those who prevent the termination of the inhumane sanctions against the Iraqi people are, in fact, the masters of the Kuwaiti Government — the Americans and the British, who are interested in carrying out their own political programme without respect for international legitimacy.

Mr. Flores (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation wishes to refer to the mentions made this

morning to the Spanish cities of Ceuta and Melilla and to other parts of Spanish territory in the speech that was made to the plenary by the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of the Kingdom of Morocco, a country with which Spain maintains and wishes to continue maintaining excellent relations based on sincere friendship, good-neighbourliness, respect and a rich shared history of which we are proud.

In underlining the excellency of our relations and the importance that my country attaches to them, I repeat that the cities of Ceuta and Melilla and the adjacent islands are an integral part of Spanish territory, whose citizens are represented in the Spanish Parliament with exactly the same status and under the same conditions as the rest of their compatriots.

Mr. Al-Otaibi (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): My delegation listened attentively to the response of the representative of Iraq to the statement of the Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Kuwait, and I find it really difficult not to refute some of the contradictions in his response. I find it necessary to clarify the facts that are already known to most Member States and further to reiterate them.

First, regarding the issue of the Kuwaiti prisoners and detainees, Iraq has boycotted the work of the Tripartite Commission, which is chaired by the International Committee of the Red Cross, since December 1998. This is not the first time Iraq has boycotted the Committee's work. Regarding the participation of the countries of the alliance — the United Kingdom, the United States and France — they have participated in the work of the Commission as a result of an agreement concluded by the parties concerned — Iraq, Kuwait and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia — in Riyadh in 1999. The agreement spells out the composition of the Commission and its modus operandi. Iraq is regrettably trying to pull out of that agreement and to renouncing it. Iraq is required by Security Council resolutions 686 (1991), 687 (1991) and 1284 (1999) to resume its participation in the works of the Tripartite Commission and its subcommittee and to cooperate with the high-level international coordinator, who was appointed by the Secretary-General in order to facilitate the solution of this humanitarian problem.

What Kuwait is asking for is implementation of the Security Council resolutions and serious and constructive cooperation to solve this problem on a purely humanitarian basis, not linked to any other political issues. What Iraq is doing is linking its participation in the Tripartite Commission to the non-participation of the countries of the Alliance.

Secondly, regarding the missing Iraqi persons, despite our information that Iraq has pushed this issue in order to create confusion and divert attention from the main problem — the issue of Kuwaiti and third countries' prisoners or detainees — Kuwait has agreed, for humanitarian reasons, to consider and study any files that Iraq might submit. Kuwait has also cooperated seriously with the Tripartite Commission and has expressed its readiness to receive any committee that might be established to visit prisons or any other places that this committee might deem suitable inside Kuwait.

There is a specific mechanism for considering all the files, adopted and approved by all the parties. There is also a timetable that was agreed to during the meetings of the Tripartite Commission and its technical subcommittee. If Iraq were keen to know the fate of the missing Iraqi persons, why did it not attend the meetings of the Commission?

The fact of the matter is that the issue of the Iraqi missing persons is not mentioned in any of the resolutions of the Security Council. This is in contrast to the issue of Kuwaiti prisoners and detainees, which is an integral part of the obligations of Iraq, obligations that Iraq is expected to fully meet.

Thirdly, regarding Iraq's allegations vis-à-vis Security Council resolutions, Kuwait is not the only country that says that Iraq has not fully implemented Security Council resolutions. The Gulf Cooperation Council, the Arab League, the Organization of the Islamic Conference, the Non-aligned Movement, and the Security Council — all such regional and international organizations have called on Iraq to implement the resolutions of the Security Council. This can be seen in paragraph 54 of the Secretary-General's report on the work of the Organization, from which His Excellency the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Kuwait quoted in his speech.

Kuwait is not responsible for the embargo and the sanctions regime. The Security Council is the sole and only body that has the authority to lift or maintain the sanctions. Kuwait is not a member of the Council. Kuwait is a small country and does not have such influence on all the Council members that it can force maintenance or extension of the sanctions.

The meeting rose at 7.25 p.m.

United Nations A/55/PV.14

General Assembly

Fifty-fifth session

Official Records

14th plenary meeting
Thursday, 14 September 2000, 10 a.m.
New York

President Mr. Holkeri ..... (Finland)

The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

Agenda item 122 *(continued)*

Scale of assessments for the apportionment of the expenses of the United Nations (A/55/345/Add.4)

The President: I should like to inform members that, since the issuance of documents A/55/345 and Addenda 1 to 3, Grenada and Guinea have made the necessary payments to reduce their arrears below the amount specified in Article 19 of the Charter.

May I take it that the General Assembly duly takes note of this information?

It was so decided.

The President: This information will be reflected in document A/55/345/Add.4, to be issued.

Agenda item 9 *(continued)*

General debate

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Selim El-Hoss, President of the Council of Ministers and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Lebanese Republic.

Mr. El-Hoss (Lebanon) *(spoke in Arabic)*: It gives me pleasure, Sir, to congratulate you on your election as President of the General Assembly at its fifty-fifth session. I am confident that your vast experience and unswerving efforts will guarantee the achievement of the best results at this session.

I would also like to thank your predecessor, Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Namibia, for having wisely and successfully conducted the deliberations of the fifty-fourth session. I would be remiss if I failed to express to the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, our thanks and appreciation for his efforts to preserve the principles and purposes of the Charter with a view to consolidating the prospects for peace and stability around the world.

A new century has been ushered in. Our peoples and countries believe in the United Nations and in its ability to embrace new visions and concepts. We have high hopes that a reinvigorated Organization will promote a new world order forged, in essence, by the new forces at play. This will be a world order free from the new power play in order to consolidate the prospects for international peace and security in different parts of the globe and to meet the costs of development, which is the right of each and every individual. This can only be accomplished if we succeed in reactivating the central role of the United Nations. The primary organs of the Organization, namely, the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council, must be entrusted with containing and checking the dangers that face humanity and that threaten its social and economic peace as well as its security.

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-178. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

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I am pleased to announce that, towards the end of next year, Lebanon will host the summit of the International Organization of La Francophonie to be held in the context of the Dialogue among Civilizations. Lebanon's experience in coexistence, its pluralistic nature and its openness to the world are, in our view, the best expression of such a dialogue.

We all agree that the United Nations is an indispensable international institution, notwithstanding its inability to settle many disputes since its inception. The United Nations has at times been lax in enforcing its own resolutions, and at others it has been influenced by the international balance of power, which made it blind to the double standards at play. But what is indisputable is that the United Nations, with its mandates and its multifaceted world activities, constitutes a major human achievement and tradition. We must build upon this achievement by evincing the necessary will to lead the world towards reconciliation whilst maintaining the necessary balance between the collective interests of States, large and small.

Our actions must be based on the principles of solidarity, equality and justice enshrined in the Charter. This is of particular importance at this crucial juncture in our human existence. While vast regions of the world are plagued by poverty, deprivation and disease, others are enjoying a social and economic boom rarely matched in the history of mankind. It is therefore important to jump start the different United Nations organs and specialized agencies, which have already impressed us with daily records of achievement that stand as a true measure of our collective spirit of solidarity . This solidarity must be the cornerstone of a new humanitarian world order capable of protecting the individual and of respecting all aspects of his rights.

In this context, we highly value the steps taken to restructure some of the development organs of the Organization. Such steps have introduced into their work programmes the concept of cooperation with the institutions of civil society and with international financial institutions, the private sector and the donor community.

In the second half of May this year, Lebanon and the United Nations witnessed a historic event when my country recovered most of its occupied territories in the south and in western Bekaa. Thanks to the resistance and steadfastness of the Lebanese people and the support of the international community, Israel had to withdraw from these territories after a ferocious occupation that lasted more than 22 years. It left behind a trail of devastation and destruction of infrastructure, private property and the environment, as well as a collapse in local production centres. Lebanon has paid dearly for its liberation. Thousands fell as martyrs on the road to victory and thousands more were injured or disabled.

Human and material losses were not confined to the areas that were immediately under occupation. For 30 years, the Israeli arm of aggression has stretched far to reach all Lebanese territories. Repeated Israeli strikes terrorized our civilian population, destroyed civilian and vital establishments and wreaked havoc on our economic and service sectors. The Israeli withdrawal came in the wake of 22 years of continued refusal to comply with Security Council resolutions 425 (1978) and 426 (1978), which called upon Israel to withdraw immediately and unconditionally from Southern Lebanon and the western Bekaa to the internationally recognized borders, with strict respect for the territorial integrity, sovereignty and political independence of Lebanon.

For the first time since 1978, the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) was allowed to fulfil its mandate under resolution 425 (1978). To do this, the United Nations had to identify a line for the purpose of confirming the Israeli withdrawal. Regrettably, in three locations, this line did not conform to the internationally recognized boundary line demarcated in 1923 between Palestine and Lebanon under the French and British Mandates. The United Nations border line also leaves the Shabaa farmlands outside UNIFIL's area of operation in Southern Lebanon.

Lebanon has seriously cooperated with the United Nations to fulfil the requirements for the implementation of Security Council resolution 425 (1978). Despite Israel's repeated violations of the withdrawal line and its obstructive practices, which hindered the deployment of the international work force for weeks, the force was at long last able to deploy, accompanied by the Lebanese armed forces.

At this juncture, I see it fit to recall Lebanon's civilized stance and the wisdom and tolerance graciously shown by its valiant people after its victory and the withdrawal of the Israeli forces. Contrary to dire predictions, no mayhem or acts of vengeance

ensued. This has earned us the appreciation and admiration of the international community.

On this occasion, allow me to pay tribute to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Kofi Annan, to his assistants and to the officers and soldiers of UNIFIL for the tireless and unswerving efforts they have been making in fulfilment of their noble task and in compliance with the resolutions of international legitimacy.

In this context, I would like to underline the importance of the following points. First, Lebanon insists that its internationally recognized borders remain intact. They are the borders demarcated in accordance with the 1923 Paulet-Newcomb maps, and reaffirmed later in the 1949 Israeli-Lebanese General Armistice Agreement. Second, Lebanon confirms its reservations on three locations on the blue line of withdrawal adopted by the United Nations as the withdrawal line. This reservation is included in the report submitted by the Secretary-General to the Security Council on 16 June 2000.

Third, Lebanon insists on its right to sovereignty over the Shaba'a farmlands, which are an integral part of Lebanese territories. Fourth, Lebanon insists on its sovereignty and authority over the locations set by the United Nations inside the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) line in the Mount Hermon area.

Fifth, Lebanon demands the immediate release of all Lebanese detainees from Israeli prisons. They are kept as hostages in violation of the terms of the 1949 Fourth Geneva Convention, of the relevant Protocols and of the Hague Convention of 1907. Lebanon believes that the release of the detainees will be a completion of the Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon and will therefore be a fulfilment of Security Council resolution 425 (1978).

Sixth, the liberation of Lebanese territories from Israeli occupation shall remain compromised unless a just solution is found to the problem of Palestinian refugees residing in Lebanon. The solution lies in allowing these refugees to return to their homeland, as provided for in the resolutions of international legitimacy.

Israel must compensate Lebanon for the human, material and economic losses sustained as a result of Israeli occupation and other acts of aggression, in accordance with international and customary laws and with the principles of the United Nations Charter. In this regard, we recall Security Council resolution 262 (1968), which entitled Lebanon to appropriate redress for the enormous destruction it suffered when Israel attacked Beirut's International Airport in late 1968. In that attack, Israel destroyed 13 civilian Lebanese aircraft. The Lebanese firmly believe in their right to receive adequate and fair reparations for the substantial loss and devastation inflicted upon them after many long years of occupation and repeated acts of aggression. Those acts have been perpetrated by Israel since 1978 in stark defiance of the will of the United Nations.

Lebanon will therefore resort to the International Court of Justice (ICJ), which is the proper organ to which to address its claims. We hope that the ICJ will be able to endorse our request for adequate reparations and we appeal to the international community to support our just and fair demands.

The question of the reconstruction and rehabilitation of the Lebanese liberated territories enjoys a high priority on the Lebanese agenda. It also enjoys tangible international support. In this context, I would like to recall the preparatory meeting of the donor community, held in Beirut on 27 July in cooperation with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the support of the World Bank and the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan. This meeting was attended by representatives of 40 States and international financial institutions. The participants discussed the question of providing urgent financial assistance to help restore normalcy to the liberated territories. The preliminary deliberations were promising and we hope to see them materialize at the donors' conference to be held at the ministerial level in October.

The Lebanese feel that the international community did not exert adequate efforts to compel Israel to comply with Security Council resolution 425 (1978), which called upon Israel to end its occupation a long time ago. Due to this delay, Lebanon as a whole had to suffer the dire consequences of occupation. Our resources plummeted, our economy crumbled and our people endured untold suffering. From this rostrum, I appeal to the donor countries, to international financial institutions and to the United Nations specialized agencies to provide sufficient assistance for the reconstruction and rehabilitation of South Lebanon.

This will be a token of solidarity on behalf of the international community.

We thought that the prospects for the realization of a just and comprehensive peace in the region were real following the recent rounds of negotiations. Regrettably, the results were disappointing. The negotiations for peace floundered and the process was derailed on all tracks. This was due to the fact that the Israeli leaders gave the logic of "No's" precedence over the principles of right and justice. This is particularly unfortunate in the light of the many achievements made in bringing the negotiations so close to an optimal solution, especially on the Syrian track.

The prerogatives of peace are not commensurate with the Israeli "No's". These "No's" run counter to the resolutions of international legitimacy that provided for the return to Syria of the entire Golan up to the line of 4 June 1967. These resolutions also recognized the need to enable the Palestinian people to recover their inalienable rights, including their right to self-determination, the establishment of their independent State on their own national soil, with Jerusalem as its capital, and their right to return to their homeland in Palestine.

The liberation of most of the Lebanese territories from Israeli occupation will not affect Lebanon's commitment to the process of peaceful settlement of the Middle East question. Lebanon upholds its position with regard to the inseparability of the Syrian and Lebanese tracks. We believe that the opportunity for a just and comprehensive peace remains, provided that Israel complies with the resolutions of international legitimacy and the Madrid terms of reference.

Lebanon believes that Israel has forfeited the achievements made in its negotiations with the Arab side due to the conflicting domestic agendas of various Israeli political groups. This will hinder the settlement process in the region, and will further compromise our protracted pursuit of peace. Lebanon calls on the co-sponsors of the peace process — the United States and the Russian Federation — and the European Union to renew their efforts to relaunch the peace process from the point where it left off in 1996.

Lebanon cannot fail to stress once again that in order to achieve a peaceful settlement, the Palestinian refugees, particularly those hosted by Lebanon, must be allowed to return to their homeland. Ignoring their problem or attempting to resettle them in Lebanon will further exacerbate the tension and the volatility of the region. This would in turn threaten the prospects of a just and lasting peace.

More than 10 years have passed since the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. Nevertheless, the question of the release of the Kuwaiti detainees and prisoners of war still awaits a solution. We in Lebanon have condemned this invasion. We believe that, in addition to other measures required of Iraq, the release of prisoners will be an important step towards improving relations with that country. Lebanon calls for lifting the sanctions imposed on Iraq in order to alleviate the suffering of the brotherly Iraqi people and to allow them to restore their security, stability and prosperity.

There is a favourable trend in the relationship between Iran and the Gulf States. That trend must be an incentive to settle the dispute over three islands that has been going on between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the United Arab Emirates for over three decades. It should be settled in the context of good-neighbourliness and the common interests promoted by the League of Arab States and the Organization of the Islamic Conference.

The Millennium Summit was convened as part of a global effort to foster the credibility of the United Nations and its ability to seek solutions to the problems of all countries and peoples. The international Organization must be capable of keeping up with the demands and challenges of the new millennium, whenever and wherever they arise. The deliberations of the Millennium Summit made it clear that what was at stake was the individual. Attempts to arrive at a global vision may differ in the details, but should definitely agree on the substance. In our view, the Millennium Declaration embodied creative ideas and principles that must be embraced in a global blueprint and translated into reality. Such a blueprint introduces novel approaches to the purposes and working methods of the United Nations.

Lebanon agrees with the conclusions of the Summit. The main challenge we face today is to guarantee that the benefits of globalization are shared by all peoples of the world. The correct approach is for us to stand united so that globalization and its manifestations and results will have a human face. Adequate controls must be developed and must take into account the different cultures, traditions and real

needs of the peoples of the world. The costs and benefits of globalization must be fairly and equally distributed.

Lebanon also believes that the protection of our common environment presents a different kind of challenge. Careful strategies must be developed for water-resource management, combating desertification, respecting and preserving ecosystems and combating environmental pollution. Those strategies must be governed by new ethics. God has privileged Lebanon with a scenic landscape and an optimal geographic location. Regrettably, we have had our share of environmental degradation. We therefore attach increasing importance to environmental issues. Laws are currently being enacted for the preservation of the environment pursuant to the decisions of relevant international conferences. We need the support of the international community in our endeavours.

Development has become the main preoccupation of the developing and least developed countries. It must be linked to an open and just global trading system within an institutional framework that guarantees unobstructed investment and capital flows, as well as the transfer of technology.

We must develop an international mechanism within the United Nations to address the indebtedness of developing countries.

In our view, there is an inherent link between the maintenance of regional and international peace and security and the process of development and peace-building. Hotbeds of tension and protracted armed conflict in some regions of Africa, the Balkans and the Middle East impede the realization of integrated development. Our international Organization must therefore dedicate more efforts to defusing tensions and to resolving crises by reforming and invigorating the roles of its two primary organs, namely, the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council.

In conclusion, Lebanon is a founding Member of the United Nations and has contributed to the drafting of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Today, Lebanon looks forward to playing a distinct role in the regional and international arenas. We are anxious to reconstruct and rehabilitate our vital and civil institutions and productive sectors after the liberation of our land from the Israeli occupation. We in Lebanon are striving for a just and comprehensive peace in the Middle East that will bring back stability to our region and allow us to play a positive role in building a new world in which we aspire to live.

The President: I now give the floor to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Norway, His Excellency Mr. Thorbjørn Jagland.

Mr. Jagland (Norway): First of all, I would like to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your assumption of your important position. I would also like to welcome Tuvalu as a new Member of the United Nations.

Norway is committed to a strong and effective United Nations. For decades, we have pursued a policy of translating our commitment to the United Nations into substantial contributions to the various activities of the United Nations system. That is why some 60,000 Norwegians have served in United Nations peacekeeping operations. That is why Norway today contributes 1,500 military and civilian personnel to United Nations and United Nations-mandated peacekeeping operations around the world. That is why we are supporting the peace and reconciliation efforts of the United Nations in the Middle East, Colombia, Cyprus and Sudan. And that is why a relatively small country of 4.5 million inhabitants is one of the largest donors of voluntary contributions to the economic, social and humanitarian programmes of the United Nations. This year, Norway is providing $1.3 billion dollars for development cooperation. My Government plans to increase that amount substantially over the next few years. A large part of that will be channelled through the United Nations system.

At the first session of the General Assembly in the twenty-first century, and after the successful Millennium Assembly last week, it is time to take stock and act upon the decisions we have made. Here is what Norway will give priority to in the time ahead.

We will focus on the root causes of conflict and put the fight against poverty, underdevelopment and environmental degradation at the top of our agenda.

Financing for development is essential. Norway reached the 0.7 per cent target more than 20 years ago. We are currently devoting 0.9 per cent of our gross national product for official development assistance, and my Government has pledged to reach a full one per cent.

We will increase our support through the multilateral development agencies, including our

support to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

We will continue to advocate a more comprehensive approach to peace-building. Conflict prevention, humanitarian relief and long-term development cannot be regarded as separate tasks. They must be part of an integrated and coherent strategy of human security.

We will continue to combat malaria, tuberculosis and other diseases. Malaria alone takes two lives every minute of every day of every year, mainly those of children and pregnant women. We will significantly increase our contribution to the vaccination of children, so that they do not die of easily curable diseases.

We will intensify our efforts to help contain and reduce the spread of HIV/AIDS, which in many countries has become the single largest threat to development. We will focus even more strongly on Africa, as Africa needs a new and better deal. We call for a renewed commitment to Africa and are prepared to contribute substantially to this effort.

The United Nations has mounted more peace operations during the last 10 years than during the previous four decades combined. We have witnessed significant successes, but also uncovered disturbing and tragic weaknesses. Far too often — and frequently at great cost to the people we were supposed to protect — the United Nations has relied on last-minute efforts and ad hoc arrangements. The rich and powerful Member States must honour their promises to the weak and defenceless.

Norway supports the recommendations in the report of the United Nations Panel on Peace Operations, headed by Ambassador Brahimi. We stand ready to engage in a broad dialogue on how to ensure the speedy and efficient implementation of the recommendations contained in the Brahimi report.

Together with our partners, we will push forward towards non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. We will work for further reductions in nuclear arsenals with a view to eliminating them, building on the important results of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) Review Conference here in New York.

We will continue to combat illicit trade and the spread of small arms. We should make full use of the opportunity provided by the United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All its Aspects to take firm steps to curtail this deadly traffic.

None of this can be done, however, if we do not secure a sound financial basis for the United Nations itself. We must put United Nations finances on a more secure and predictable footing. We must close the gap between the tasks we ask the United Nations to carry out and the resources we make available to it. Zero growth is clearly not sufficient. We cannot expect the United Nations to carry out new and additional tasks without additional funding.

No one must be allowed to commit war crimes or crimes against humanity with impunity. Norway therefore strongly supports the Statute establishing an International Criminal Court. Now we must seek its speedy implementation.

To effectively meet our common challenges, we must build new partnerships between the United Nations, civil society and the private sector. The "Global Compact" is one such initiative. The "Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization" (GAVI) is another. Early next year Norway will host an international conference in Oslo on the role of the private sector in promoting investment and economic development in the least developed countries.

We will continue to support efforts to enable developing countries to take full advantage of the benefits of multilateral cooperation. In particular, we would like to assist the least developed countries — including small island developing States — to benefit more fully from joint international efforts, including the legal regime for the seas and oceans established by the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

Globalization provides opportunities for unprecedented growth, but it can also lead to marginalization and isolation. In our globalized world, markets have become global much faster than politics. There is an urgent need to adapt the international trading and financial systems so that every country can obtain its fair share of the benefits of globalization.

In our shrinking world, providing humanitarian aid and emergency relief to people in need is the responsibility of every Government. Norway will increase its humanitarian efforts — which are already among the most intensive in the world — both

bilaterally and through United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations.

We will to the best of our ability continue to facilitate peace efforts in countries where the parties to a conflict request our involvement. Ultimately, however, the responsibility for lasting peace rests with the parties themselves.

Finally, we reiterate our call for reform and enlargement of the Security Council in terms of both permanent and non-permanent members. Broader membership and increased transparency are essential to the legitimacy and effectiveness of the Council.

For the first time since 1979, Norway is seeking a seat on the Security Council. We hope to be elected, after 22 years, based on our contributions to the United Nations and on the principles of fair rotation. We therefore ask for the support of the Assembly. Norway will deeply respect a mandate from the Assembly. We will be attentive to its voices and concerns. We will remain committed to help those who suffer from poverty and war, disasters and famine to place a strong United Nations at the centre of world affairs, to ensure that those who have the strongest backs bear the heaviest burden. We ask the Assembly to allow us to serve all Members.

The President: I give the floor to the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, His Excellency The Right Honourable Robin Cook.

Mr. Cook (United Kingdom): I am conscious that the central problem for all of us when we rise to speak to the General Assembly is that there are too many issues of concern to hope to address them all in one speech. There is no shortage of challenges to the United Nations as we meet for the first time in a new century to debate the issues of a modern world.

It is a world united by the new technologies of communication. We have never had so much opportunity to share the know-how for economic growth. Yet our world has never before been so divided between rich and poor. In the year ahead, we must make sure that all the United Nations agencies and its international financial institutions work together in a coordinated way to promote development and to reduce debt.

It is also a world bound together by growth in trade between our countries. But we failed at Seattle to make further progress on removing the obstacles to that trade. In the year ahead, we must launch a world trade development round which is fair to those countries whose main exports are agricultural rather than industrial.

It is a world which faces a common threat to its global climate. We are each learning the alarming rate at which that climate is changing as the result of our own actions. Before the end of the year, we must try to reach agreement at the sixth Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change to bring into effect the Kyoto measures to stabilize climate change.

Each of these is an important challenge. Each of them is a strategic priority for our work programme for the coming year. This morning, though, I wish to focus my remarks on the central theme of the Millennium Summit and of this fifty-fifth session of the General Assembly.

How do we equip the United Nations with the capacity in peacekeeping that matches the real demands for it around our world?

In his opening address, the Secretary-General invited us to give a swift response to the Brahimi report on peacekeeping (A/55/305). The United Kingdom is happy to respond to that invitation by offering our support for the report's conclusions and pledging our commitment to its implementation. The report begins by reminding us that the United Nations was founded, in the words of its Charter, "to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war". Too often, though, we have failed to save those who needed our protection from the suffering, the pain and the terror of brutal conflict. We must be frank in facing up to those failures if we are to learn their lessons. And we must be determined to improve the capacity of this Organization to keep the peace if we are to succeed in the future.

I want to set out six tasks which we must address if we are not to repeat past failures. First, we must equip the United Nations with a more effective and more rapid capacity for peacekeeping. In the space of about one year, the number of troops on United Nations peacekeeping missions around the globe has trebled. The United Kingdom has forces operating in eight different theatres where peacekeeping has been authorized by the United Nations.

But it is not the new size of our peacekeeping effort that demands changes. It is the different character of the peacekeeping challenge. It used to be the case that United Nations forces were typically deployed to observe a ceasefire between two States both of which wanted to end the fighting. Today, our peacekeepers are typically deployed within States, not between them, and often where one or more parties to the conflict is not seriously committed to peace. In those circumstances, United Nations peacekeepers need a robust mandate. As the Brahimi report puts it, where one side is violating a peace agreement, treating both sides equally can amount to complicity with evil. United Nations peacekeepers who witness violence against civilians should be presumed to be mandated to halt it.

But if those peacekeepers are to act with determination, then we must equip them with the capacity to do so. The United Nations needs a Headquarters unit capable of rapid deployment within a few weeks, not a few months, of a Security Council resolution. And each of us must develop the number of troops who are trained in the principles and practice of peacekeeping whom we can commit to the United Nations. That is why the United Kingdom has proposed a permanent staff college for United Nations peacekeeping. The United Kingdom has offered to host such a resource for United Nations peacekeeping, if that is welcome to other members of the General Assembly.

The second task is to be more rapid and more imaginative in tackling tension before it results in conflict. By definition, any mission to restore peace is an admission of failure to prevent conflict. As well as coping with the consequences of conflict, we need to address the root causes of conflict: poverty, bad governance and the denial of freedom or of minority rights. I welcome the Secretary-General's intention to submit a report on conflict prevention early next year. It will be a natural companion to the Brahimi report. I hope it can enable us to develop an early warning system which will alert us to potential conflict and give our agencies the chance to offer help before it becomes a real conflict.

Too often, internal conflict is fuelled by the external demand for the illicit trade in diamonds or the evil trade in drugs. Measures to ban conflict diamonds from international sale or to defeat the drugs barons must be key elements of any comprehensive strategy of conflict prevention.

The third task is to take tighter control of the flows of arms which supply conflict. As an international community, we have put much effort into controlling weapons of mass destruction. The good progress we all made at the Review Conference of the States Parties to the Treaty on the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) underlines the importance which each of us attaches to this strategic issue. The United Kingdom has ratified the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, has reduced by half its planned strategic nuclear warheads, and has supplied greater transparency on our nuclear arsenal.

Yet, over the past decade, the true weapons of mass destruction have been small arms, which have killed 5 million people in conflicts around the globe. Overwhelmingly, those killed were civilians rather than soldiers. And, overwhelmingly, they were killed in countries which do not manufacture firearms. We must make a success next year of the United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in all its Aspects. We need to reach agreement to mark firearms at the point of production so that they can be traced. The United Kingdom would support at that conference the presumption that military firearms should not be licensed for sale other than to legitimate Government bodies. And we must seek the help of the international economic agencies, including the World Bank, to fund and to reward with development aid the surrender of firearms.

The fourth task is to provide the United Nations with the civilian resources to promote reconciliation and reconstruction. In Kosovo, and again now in East Timor, we have learned that the end of conflict is only the starting point. When the troops have brought peace, we need judges and administrators to bring justice and development. The peacekeepers must be followed by peace-builders. In particular, we need to muster the civilian police who can establish law and order in place of violence and conflict. I was astonished to read in the Brahimi report that this mighty international organization has only nine civilian police on its Headquarters staff, administering 8,600 civilian police in the field around the world. I am confident that every one of them is the very best, in keeping with the tradition of United Nations staff. But if we are serious about succeeding on the ground, we need a more serious back-up at the centre. Four times in the past

decade, the United Nations has been called upon to undertake a transitional civilian administration. We need a better, permanent, capacity here at the centre to support our operations in the field.

The fifth task is to enforce the international law on crimes against humanity. If we are to have international justice, we must have an international court. The United Kingdom has given strong support to the International Criminal Court, and we have just published our draft legislation to ratify the treaty setting up such a Court. The International Criminal Court will send a strong warning to any future tyrants that they will be called to account for their crimes before the bar of international justice. It will be one of the most powerful advances for human rights since we agreed 50 years ago to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

And finally, we must strengthen the authority of the United Nations. In 50 years, there has been no new permanent member of the Security Council. The Security Council needs to represent the world as it is in this century, not the world as it was in the middle of the last century. It needs to be made representative of the 100 or more countries that have joined as Members since the Security Council was set up. The United Kingdom supports a doubling of the permanent membership to include Germany, Japan and three countries from each of the continents of Asia, Africa and Latin America. We also want more members among those who are elected, in order that the Security Council can be more representative of the General Assembly.

For seven years, we have been debating this question. It is becoming an issue of credibility for the United Nations. How can we pretend to end conflict if we cannot end this disagreement among ourselves? A more representative, modern Security Council would speak with more authority when it challenges those who breach the peace.

I have been frank about where we must improve our capacity for peacekeeping and strengthen our will to halt conflict. But we should not underrate the immense achievement of the United Nations. Our Charter begins by recalling the untold sorrow to mankind inflicted by two world wars. It was a Charter written by ministers and officials determined to end war between States. And in this they were remarkably successful. External aggression between States is now unusual.

But the benefits have been unevenly shared. The industrialized nations have enjoyed half a century of peace. That has provided the security and good order in which their prosperity has advanced at a rate without precedent in history. Yet, in the same half century, people elsewhere in the globe have lived through violence and conflict which have broken their human rights and impoverished their standards of living. It is largely poor countries that now experience the scourge of war which our Charter sought to banish.

The challenge for the United Nations is to ensure that the peace and security which have been enjoyed by many Member States are shared by all. None of us can prevent humanitarian catastrophe by acting alone. But this United Nations can, if we act together.

The Brahimi report tells us what we need to do. As an organization, we publish many reports. Nobody could fault the capacity of the United Nations to produce reports. But we are not always as good at implementing them. Let us make sure that the Brahimi report does not gather dust on library shelves but is put into practice before we meet again next year. Let us show the determination and the conviction that the right in our Charter to be preserved from war is an equal right for the people of all our nations, large and small, rich and poor.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Abdurrahman Shalghem, the Secretary of the General People's Committee for Foreign Liaison and International Cooperation of the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya.

Mr. Shalghem (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) *(spoke in Arabic)*: It gives me great pleasure, Sir, to extend to you, on behalf of my country's delegation, our congratulations on your election as President of this session, and to wish you every success in the management of its affairs. I would also like to express our appreciation to your predecessor, Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab, the Foreign Minister of Namibia, who administered the work of the fifty-fourth session of the General Assembly most competently. I wish also to seize this opportunity to express our gratitude to Secretary General Kofi Annan for his initiatives, which have been instrumental in putting an end to tension in many parts of the world and for his endeavours aimed at reform of the United Nations and the enhancement

of its role, so that it may better fulfil its duties, according to the Charter. A word of welcome is also due to the Republic of Tuvalu, which joined us a few days ago as a new member of the United Nations.

This session is convened in the aftermath of several developments. In the past few days, the Secretary-General submitted "Comprehensive report on peacekeeping operations; it included a number of recommendations that would assist the United Nations in assuming its responsibilities in this field. Furthermore, over the last few months, the General Assembly convened two special sessions, the first conducted a review of the progress made in the implementation of the outcome of the World Conference on Women, and the second reviewed progress in the implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development and beyond. Last week, this hall witnessed the convening of the Millennium Assembly, at the conclusion of which the leaders of the world expressed their adherence to the United Nations and renewed their commitment to the purposes and principles of its Charter, as well as their intent to lend it their support and to enhance its role to enable it to cope with the new century, with all its changes and challenges. In our view, these developments will undoubtedly contribute to the efforts aimed at achieving the goals of this Organization. However, it must also be noted that we are still far from achieving the ultimate goal for which we strive — namely, the establishment of a world that enjoys peace, security, freedom, equality, and justice, a world free from oppression, acts of aggression, and attempts to impose hegemony and domination.

There are many regions in the world today that suffer from wars and conflicts. Famine and diseases such as cancer, malaria, and acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS) still threaten the lives of millions. Resources provided by nature for the sustenance of life are being seriously endangered. Developing countries have not benefited from the advantages of globalization in a manner proportional to their suffering from its negative impact. In fact, international financial institutions have started to impose severe conditions on these countries to the extent that they find themselves at the mercy of a new form of colonialism. Attempts to intervene in the internal affairs of other States have threatened to eliminate sovereignty — not only to violate it.

There are also unilateral boycott policies and imposition of unjust sanctions, even aggression, under the pretext of so-called international legitimacy. Old ideological barriers have been replaced by new barriers that obstruct the States of the South from access to technology they desperately need for development, and that impose trade protection measures on their products by making other markets inaccessible to them. We are also witnessing selectivity in the sphere of disarmament and double standard policies in the treatment of international issues. Furthermore, criminal activities have increased, including illicit drug trafficking, the financing of organized crime and all kinds of transnational crimes.

Such is the current state of the world, with its various variables and challenges, after the collapse of international equilibrium. Such a state of affairs necessitates the adoption of certain measures to combat and rectify the prevailing conditions. The United Nations, in its capacity as an instrument and reference authority for all, should perform a pivotal role in dealing with these variables. However, we believe that the Organization will not be capable of making an effective contribution in this respect unless radical reforms are introduced into the composition of its organs and the working mechanisms of its entities. In order to guarantee success for this process, we should make it a comprehensive one that takes into account the aspirations, ideas, and proposals of all Member States, big and small, strong and weak. The responsibility for success or failure of this process must ultimately be a joint responsibility.

My country, wishing to contribute to the ongoing efforts aimed at reforming the United Nations, believes that the required reform should achieve the following objectives: first, strengthening the role of the General Assembly so that it becomes the authority responsible for determining and deciding the conditions that must be deemed truly threatening to international peace and security. A mechanism answerable to the General Assembly should be established to ensure the implementation of its resolutions and to enable it to control and hold accountable other United Nations organs, including the Security Council, which itself should be an executive entity for the implementation of General Assembly resolutions.

Secondly, restructuring the Security Council so that it achieves fair geographical representation in its membership, with equity for African, Asian, and Latin

American States that are not fairly represented in the membership of the Council.

Thirdly, improving the ways and methods by which the Security Council conducts its work so that its activities are rendered more transparent. Its rules of procedures should also be reviewed. In fact, the General Assembly, which represents all the Member States of the Organization, should issue such rules, otherwise, it would be meaningless to say that the Council acts on behalf of the international community.

Fourthly, we urge the abolition of the prerogatives that the victors of the Second World War granted to themselves, particularly the right of veto, which should be eliminated because it is non-democratic and undermines the principle of the full equality of Member States, as enshrined in the Charter.

Fifthly, in order to enable the Organization to follow up on its plans and programmes, we propose the establishment of an international committee answerable to the United Nations, with subcommittees that cover most regions of the world, empowered with the necessary mandates and resources to undertake the tasks of inspecting and implementing United Nations programmes.

Despite the problems suffered by many African countries, the current year has witnessed some encouraging developments. In Somalia, Parliament was able to choose a new President for the country and the disputing parties in Burundi signed a national reconciliation agreement. The fighting that broke out between Ethiopia and Eritrea has been contained and both sides have signed a ceasefire agreement. These solutions were the fruits of efforts made by the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and a number of African leaders who sincerely care for the security, stability and development of the continent. For its part, my country has contributed to all these efforts and will pursue, in cooperation with the OAU and the Secretary-General of the United Nations, our initiatives aimed at securing a just settlement acceptable to all parties to the conflict in Sierra Leone. We will also continue our good offices with the aim of finding a solution to the conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo and the Great Lakes region on the basis of the implementation of the Sirte agreement, which was completed in Lusaka, for the purpose of ending the dispute in that region.

From the outset, we in Libya have realized that Africa's problems are partly due to its disunity and the fragmentation of its own peoples' efforts. Therefore, in order for the continent to be truly capable of facing the challenge of disputes, disease and backwardness, as well as others imposed by new international situations, Brother Colonel Muammar Al-Qadhafi, the leader of the revolution, has pursued his efforts to unify the continent so that it may be ushered into the new century strong and unified. It was in this spirit that a meeting of African foreign ministers was held in Tripoli last April, at which the founding law for the African Union was drafted. This law was approved in Lome last June at the Assembly of Heads of State and Government. At the invitation of the leader of the revolution, the African presidents will meet in Sirte early next year to declare the official establishment of the African Union. This bears witness to the fact that Africa has overcome the negative aspects of the past and realized the dream of unity, which has been the aspiration of African peoples for decades.

All these initiatives and endeavours provide new evidence that Africa fully realizes that the solution to its problems and the advancement of its capacities reside basically in the efforts of its own sons and daughters. Nevertheless, it should be emphasized that international peace is indivisible and that international stability cannot be achieved partially. This means that the international community has an obligation to assist Africa in its efforts to realize peace and stability on its soil. As we reiterate today our invitation to all States to help Africa in developing a programme to eliminate epidemics and diseases, provide a solution to the problem of its external debt and ensure that the continent is dealt with on new, just and equitable terms, rather than be considered merely as a consumer market for the products of the industrialized world, we wish to recall, as we have always done, that Africa's problems lie in the abuse of its resources, the plundering of its wealth and riches, intervention in its internal affairs and the imposition of foreign concepts alien to its traditions and culture. We demand that such practices be discontinued, as they constitute one of the main reasons for political instability in many parts of the continent and for economic backwardness in most. We also call upon the States that colonized Africa, drew its borders and scattered and enslaved its people to offer their apologies to the continent and to fully compensate it for all the damage inflicted by colonialism.

No solution has yet been found to the Palestinian question because the essence of this problem has been ignored. My country emphasizes once again that there is no solution to the Palestinian problem other than the return of the Palestinian people to their homeland and the establishment of their State on the land of Palestine, with Jerusalem as its capital. On this occasion, as we salute the people of Lebanon who, thanks to their steadfastness, were able to defeat the enemy and liberate their occupied land, we once again stress the need for an end to the occupation of the Syrian Golan Heights. We also demand the immediate lifting of the sanctions imposed on Iraq and call upon the international community to put an end to the human tragedy endured by that country's people, to preserve the unity and integrity of its territories, to respect its sovereignty, to refrain from interfering in its internal affairs and to cease the military aggression waged daily against it.

The international community has made continuous efforts in the field of disarmament. My country, which is a party to most international conventions in this area, is still fully convinced that some international conventions addressing certain aspects in this field should be reviewed. I would refer, as one example, to the Ottawa Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction, which deals only with simple weapons of limited effect. We, as one of the third world peoples who are incapable of defending our borders and lands against the powerful who possess aircraft carriers and aircraft that refuel in flight, feel that humanity should be preoccupied with the destruction of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons, as well as with ballistic weapons, rather concern itself with mines, which are a simple form of weaponry.

On the other hand, we have noticed that a number of obstacles still hinder the efforts to establish a world free of weapons of mass destruction. Those who possess nuclear arms have not yet undertaken actual measures to dispose of their nuclear arsenals. In fact, some of them have continued to develop these weapons vertically, instead of beginning to destroy them. The Israelis, who possess hundreds of nuclear warheads with which they threaten the Arab people from the Atlantic Ocean to the Arabian Gulf, still refuse to join the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and to place their nuclear installations under the supervision and the safeguards system of the International Atomic Energy Agency.

In raising this most serious and momentous subject, we are fully convinced that, unless the international community adopts effective measures to force the Israelis to accept and implement the international conventions on nuclear disarmament, and unless the nuclear-weapon States take practical steps to prove the seriousness of their undertakings, efforts to prevent the proliferation of nuclear arms will be utterly worthless and any claims concerning the destruction of nuclear arms will be a major act of deception that will not fool the peoples of the world.

Terrorism still constitutes a source of grave danger to humanity, because no effective measures have been taken to trace the roots of this phenomenon in order to eradicate it. My country, which has been a direct victim of state terrorism, has relentlessly reiterated its strong condemnation of terrorist acts and its willingness to cooperate with all international efforts aimed at their elimination. My country's eagerness to put an end to terrorism was so strong that we called in 1992 for the convening of a special session of the General Assembly to consider methods to eradicate all forms of terrorism and violence.

Today, in reiterating this request, it is most important that we clarify that the correct approach to eliminating terrorism must begin with providing a definition for terrorism that is universal, objective, democratic and scientific. It is genuinely unacceptable that some still classify the struggle of peoples for their freedom and the fight of persecuted groups against their persecutors as forms of terrorism, whereas they turn a blind eye to real terrorism, embodied in unjust sanctions, occupation, invasion, foreign military bases, naval fleets, weapons of mass destruction and the use and threat of use of force. Unless all such matters are dealt with, it is certain that any international efforts to eliminate terrorism will be of no avail.

We believe that it has become necessary to take additional measures to reinforce international systems, such as the Statute of the International Criminal Court, concerned with the punishment of perpetrators of the most serious crimes against international security. In its present form, the Statute is designed to try only the weak. We ask that it be modified to guarantee the trial of all perpetrators of acts of aggression, drug smugglers and their trading partners, those responsible

for massacres of innocent people, and those who commit acts of aggression against United Nations troops.

We look forward to the establishment of a world in which equality and justice prevail and which is free from discrimination, oppression and injustice. This will require the drafting of laws that preserve the rights of mother and child and guarantee that a person may own his own house and be a partner in his own productive work, that his basic needs will not be subject to commercialization and that his rights are not usurped as a source of income.

We also look forward to taking practical measures that lead to the realization of a world free from motives of aggression, manifestations of violence, epidemics and diseases. We also hope that efforts will be joined to combat the phenomenon of the "white poisons". Moreover, in order to protect our planet from the dangers that threaten it, we should work to eradicate pests, strive to establish low-cost water desalination systems and seek to prevent the flow of waters of rivers, rain and snow to seas and oceans. Furthermore, all factors that hinder the prevention of desertification and the expansion of agricultural development should be removed. One of these factors is the problem of mines and other remnants of war from which many countries, including my own, still suffer. There are still millions of mines in our lands planted by the fighting forces during the Second World War. We hope that the States responsible for planting these mines will respond to the international decisions that call upon them to make available maps for their locations and to provide technical assistance for their removal.

Allow me now to raise a subject that has preoccupied the attention of the international community for the last seven years, namely the dispute between my country and a number of Western States concerning the Lockerbie incident. I would like to focus on the manner in which the Security Council has dealt with this issue since the suspension of the sanctions in April of last year. As you are well aware, more than a year and a half have now elapsed since the two suspects appeared before the Scottish court convened in the Netherlands. Almost the same period has elapsed since the Secretary-General submitted his report to the Security Council pursuant to resolutions 883 (1993) and 1192 (1998), in which he confirmed that my country has fulfilled the demands stated in the relevant Security Council resolutions. Despite all these developments, however, the Council has been prevented from adopting the resolution that requires the lifting of the sanctions, because of the intransigence of one country, the United States. This intransigence has been such that a threat to use the right of veto was voiced.

The United States gave a number of justifications to prevent the Security Council from lifting the unjust sanctions imposed upon the Libyan people. The first of these justifications is that Libya still supports terrorism. This is a groundless pretext. My country, which was itself a victim of terrorism in 1986 and before, has repeatedly declared its condemnation of international terrorism in all its aspects and forms, and stressed its support for all international efforts aimed at its eradication. Moreover, the Secretary-General's report has given irrefutable proof concerning the vacuity and lack of truth of all American claims that Libya supports terrorism.

The second of these American justifications is that Libya should cooperate with the Scottish court convened in the Netherlands. This is a refutable justification, as my country has pledged from the beginning, that it will cooperate fully with the court. This pledge has, in fact, been proven since the court started reviewing the case. In fact, the United States is the one that has not fully cooperated with the court by hiding basic information requested by the court, which in itself violates Security Council resolutions that call upon all States, and in particular the concerned ones, to cooperate with the Scottish court sitting in the Netherlands.

The third, and the strangest of these justifications, is the demand that Libya pay compensation to the families of the victims of the Pan Am Flight 103. The question to be raised here is: How could the United States ask for compensation while the Scottish court has not yet reached a verdict? Does this not constitute a complete disregard for the legal principle that stipulates a presumption of innocence until the accused is proven guilty? Furthermore, why does the United States jump to conclusions and deliver a ready conviction, while acquittal or conviction is a matter for the court alone to decide? Libya's fulfilment of its obligations was confirmed by the Secretary- General's report a year and a half ago. It was also reaffirmed by the decisions of the Summit of the Organization of African Unity, the Non-Aligned Movement, the Organization of the Islamic Conference, the Arab

League and lastly the Group of 77 and China, which called for a complete lifting of the unjust sanctions imposed on the Libyan people.

In view of all of the above, my country demands the following:

First, this issue should not politicize, as it has now become a legal matter that should be left to the discretion of the Scottish court convened in the Netherlands without interference from any parties.

Secondly, the Security Council should, as early as possible, adopt a resolution under which the sanctions imposed on the Libyan people are fully and irrevocably lifted. This is the only procedure that reaffirms the commitment of the Council to paragraph (16) of its resolution 883 (1993), and the second paragraph of its resolution 1192 (1998). It would also reaffirm the Council's response to the wishes of the absolute majority of the international community, on whose behalf the Council is supposed to work.

Should the Council be further hindered from adopting the required resolution, my country will have no choice but to resort to this august Assembly so it could take the necessary measures to vindicate us vis-à-vis one State that refuses to lift the sanctions, a State that was behind the imposition of these sanctions in the first place.

The President: I give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Joschka Fischer, Deputy Chancellor and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Germany.

Mr. Fischer (Germany) (*spoke in German; English text furnished by the delegation*): First of all I would like to warmly congratulate you, Sir, on your election as President of the fifty-fifth session of the General Assembly, and wish you every success with your work. I would like to thank Foreign Minister Gurirab for his dedication in chairing the fifty-fourth session of the General Assembly. I welcome Tuvalu as the one hundred and eighty-ninth member of the United Nations and congratulate it on its accession. I endorse the statement of my French colleague, Hubert Védrine, on behalf of the European Union.

At this session of the General Assembly, the first in the new millennium, we are asked to determine the future tasks of the United Nations and which reforms are necessary in order to master them. The Millennium Declaration, which we all adopted on 8 September, shows us the way forward. The implementation of this Declaration should be a main focus of the consultations of this and future sessions of the General Assembly. I propose that the Secretary-General make use of the opportunity to draw up review reports at the beginning of the next session of the General Assembly.

There was one issue in particular which dominated this debate, namely globalization. It will radically change the economy and finances, politics and culture everywhere. The question is, will a new order which guarantees peace, justice and an equal share in our common progress be established or will a new divide evolve in the world? Will the future of the globalized world manifest its pluralist character in a multilateral order? Only the future can provide the answers to these questions.

Particularly for developing countries, globalization offers great opportunities. If it nevertheless provokes strong opposition, this lies in the imbalances of this historical process. Indeed, just under a decade after the end of the cold war, our world is today at risk from a new divide, one between the winners and losers of the economic globalization process. In his impressive Millennium Report, the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, rightly highlights the growing inequalities in the distribution of income, resources, investments and access to new technologies.

In view of this situation, the international community must make every effort in the coming decade to ensure that globalization benefits all peoples. If market forces are not balanced by a political corrective mechanism, it is to be expected that injustice in the world will increase further. Those who have been hitherto excluded from the advantages of globalization must be included to a greater extent. They must be given more say in the political decisions made about steering global processes and they must be given an opportunity to gain a fairer share in the development of the world economy.

In the twenty-first century, we will, more than ever before, need a form of global governance if we are to solve global challenges. The United Nations will play a key role here. It is the only organization within which the injustice between rich and poor can be overcome and where a reconciliation between peoples and regions, global peace and sustainable development can be achieved.

Greatly strengthening the United Nations capacity to act is, therefore, a crucial question for the whole of

humanity in the twenty-first century. In addition to the crucial reform of the Security Council, this will entail the United Nations entering into creative partnerships with industry and civil society.

Germany strongly supports the Secretary-General's idea for a global compact with major companies. The German initiative for a resolution in the General Assembly on global partnerships will take up this and other issues relating to the globalization process.

Global poverty is the key problem in North-South relations. It lies at the root of many global risks and threats to peace. The Secretary-General provided precise and stimulating analyses of this in his report.

The industrialized nations have a special obligation to support the poorest of the poor. With the Cologne debt initiative launched by Germany, we are combining debt relief with a strategy to combat poverty. The 20 poorest developing countries should be debt-free by the end of the year.

The least developed countries should be granted access to world markets with the greatest possible exemption from duties and quotas. We must, also by way of liberalization steps in the World Trade Organization, prevent these countries from being socially excluded even further.

This applies in particular to the new economy. The United Nations and its Member States must intensify their efforts to make it easier for these countries to use the information and communication technologies. This is contingent upon initiatives in the field of education, as well as the availability of the necessary resources.

However, how can poor countries ever catch up economically if they are, at the same time, afflicted to a much greater degree than the North by terrible diseases? The fight against the disastrous spread of the AIDS virus, particularly in Africa, must be priority for us all. The focus must be on prevention. At the same time, access to medicines must be improved and vaccine research must be intensified. The World Bank's promising idea of establishing a future fund for the purchase of vaccines deserves every support. Particularly in the fight against AIDS, new partnerships between Governments and companies are crucial.

The second major issue of this General Assembly is peacekeeping. The Secretary-General showed the way ahead with the Brahimi report. The recommendations it contains should be examined and implemented as quickly as possible. Germany will play its part. Peace missions need a more robust mandate, as well as more personnel and equipment. Member States must do considerably more to ensure the rapid secondment of well-trained troops, police officers and civilian experts. The further development of the police concept is one of the most important tasks in this connection — as the last few months and years have, in fact been teaching us.

The German Government will offer German training for civilian peace-mission personnel and offer civilian capacities to the United Nations stand-by system. In addition, we are drafting a plan for training civilian experts for peace missions, thus creating a pool of qualified personnel who can be deployed at short notice.

The prevailing form of conflict today is conflict within States. Therefore the main task of peacekeeping must be to address the internal roots of conflicts. In addition to focusing on an improvement in socio-economic conditions, our efforts must focus on promoting human rights, democracy and the rule of law. Mary Robinson, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, aptly said that the human rights violations of today are the wars of tomorrow.

Numerous concrete tasks are on the agenda. The protocols relating to the involvement of children in armed conflict and to the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography must enter into force as early as possible. The equality of women must be advanced in all spheres. I call upon all states to ratify quickly the new Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and to abolish all laws that discriminate against women by 2005. The World Conference against racism, to be held in 2001, must tackle all aspects of this issue. Out of a sense of responsibility for our history, our State and our society will stand up firmly against all forms of right-wing radicalism, racism and anti-Semitism, both in our own country and in the world.

I call upon all States to respect the integrity of the Statute of the International Criminal Court, to sign and to ratify it, so that the Court can commence work soon. There can be no exceptions to the Rome Statute.

One of the greatest dangers facing humanity remains the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. The risk of regional arms races, particularly in South Asia, has increased. Further developing the international arms-control regime therefore continues to be one of the United Nations key tasks. This will require resolute implementation of the results of the sixth Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. Against this background, President Clinton's decision not to commit now to the development of a national missile defence system is very welcome. The Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty must remain as a cornerstone of strategic stability and the basis for further nuclear-disarmament measures.

In poor countries the excessive stockpiling of small arms must be stopped. We must therefore do everything we can to achieve tangible progress at the United Nations small arms conference to be held in 2001. This presupposes the inclusion of all aspects, including the legal transfer of production and stockpiles.

Regional cooperation has proved to be an extremely effective means of preventing conflicts. The United Nations can do much to help here. Allow me to mention two regions where progress is particularly urgent. The triangle between Central Asia, the Caucasus and the Middle East is full of destabilizing factors — oil, religious fundamentalism, terrorism, drugs and the nuclear arms race — and this area is threatening to become the crisis region of the century ahead. A new comprehensive regional process, along the lines of the Helsinki model, which fosters cooperation instead of confrontation, could play an important stabilizing role. Germany is prepared to take part in such a process.

In Africa, regional approaches have gained in significance. In the main, however, it is, unfortunately, too early to talk of effective peacekeeping structures. Unfortunately, the efforts on the part of the United Nations and of the Organization of African Unity to resolve the conflicts in the Congo and Sierra Leone have not achieved a breakthrough so far. In the conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea it is to be hoped that the ceasefire that has finally been concluded will be consolidated and that the United Nations peace mission will be lent the full support of the parties to the conflict.

The third issue, protection of our natural environment, will probably become the crucial issue affecting our planet. In the course of the twentieth century the world's population quadrupled, while consumption of energy and raw materials increased tenfold. We must end the squandering of natural resources and switch to renewable energy sources as quickly as possible. This cannot only be a matter for industrialized nations. We are witnessing at this very moment what a burden high oil prices places on poor countries in particular. It must be in the interest of all States to bring about the transition from the oil to the hydrogen age as quickly as possible. The most important thing now is to finally overcome the deadlock in the climate-protection negotiations and to ensure that the Kyoto Protocol can be implemented by 2002, 10 years after the Rio Summit.

Another key issue for humanity, the future of genetic engineering, can only be mastered within the framework of a global consensus. Genetic engineering has the potential to revolutionalize medicine and agriculture. At the same time, it raises more ethical and human rights questions than any other technology. Do we not need clear, binding rules for dealing with such a powerful new technology? Why do we not seriously consider within the United Nations creating under international law a convention that meaningfully promotes genetic engineering and safeguards the freedom to research and the findings of this research, while, at the same time, defining an ethical basis and guaranteeing protection against abuse?

The Millennium Declaration points the way ahead. But what help will that be if an increasing number of Members allow the world's real problems to be dealt with and decided somewhere else? If we do not succeed in adapting the United Nations to deal with the challenges of the twenty-first century and in modernizing it fully, it will be sidelined, with fatal consequences for peace and development, human rights, the environment and social progress.

We will all, rich and poor, lose out.

We must therefore muster the strength to resolutely implement the Millennium Declaration. We need a world Organization that is strong and we must use its scarce resources more effectively. An important prerequisite for this is that the United Nations be placed finally on a solid financial footing. Together with its European Union partners, Germany has put

forward proposals for a fairer, more balanced scale of assessments, which must continue to be based on Member States' ability to pay.

The Security Council no longer reflects the political reality of our world at the dawn of the new millennium. We share the Secretary-General's view that this central steering organ of the international community must become more representative, legitimate and effective, also involving the developing countries. Last week Chancellor Schroeder reaffirmed Germany's willingness to take on more responsibility in this connection. I would like to take this opportunity to thank my friend and colleague Robin Cook for the clear language that he used before the General Assembly just a few minutes ago.

The General Assembly must structure its work, debate global problems in a more focused fashion than hitherto and identify courses of action. The synergetic potential between United Nations organizations, for example in the environmental field, must be better used and resources pooled to a greater extent by merging organizations.

Reform of the United Nations will play a decisive role in ensuring that the twenty-first century is safer and more just than the twentieth century. Allow me to conclude with a quote from the Secretary-General's Millennium Report:

> "No shift in the way we think or act can be more critical than this: we must put people at the centre of everything we do ... Only when that begins to happen will we know that globalization is indeed becoming inclusive, allowing everyone to share its opportunities." (*A/54/2000, para. 16*)

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Farouk Al-Shara', Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Syrian Arab Republic.

Mr. Farouk Al-Shara' *(spoke in Arabic)*: It gives me great pleasure to congratulate you, Sir, on your election to the presidency of this General Assembly session. We are confident that the posts you have assumed in your country and the international respect that you enjoy will facilitate the task entrusted to you in leading the deliberations of this session of the General Assembly to their desired objectives.

I would also like to express our appreciation to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Namibia for his efforts in leading the work of the previous session to a successful conclusion. I would be remiss if I failed to thank the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, for his efforts to maintain the principles and purposes of the Charter and for the distinguished role he has played in crystallizing the idea of convening the Millennium Summit last week. It was indeed an unusual event in United Nations history.

The historic Millennium Summit Declaration confirmed unequivocally and clearly the commitment of all the Heads of State and Government of the world to the principles and purposes of the Charter of the United Nations. We believe that the absence of any substantial difference between the Charter and the Declaration is an important achievement in itself. The historic Declaration issued by the Millennium Summit may be considered, in one way or another, as a renewed vote of confidence in the Charter, particularly, as the world has recently witnessed major changes and dangerous challenges. One may therefore conclude that the principles and purposes adopted by peoples and nations do not undergo major changes with the passage of time.

It would be wrong to underestimate the significance of this conclusion for the history of the United Nations. The end of the cold war did not prevent the peoples and nations of the world from denouncing and condemning crimes of aggression, ethnic-cleansing, foreign occupation, oppression, extremism, injustice, corruption, racism and double standards. Nor did this make us hesitate to glorify many noble objectives, such as freedom, peace, equality, solidarity, tolerance, human rights and social justice.

It is fortunate that third world countries and poor countries host large populations with bountiful resources and great heritage. This constitutes a safety net for those countries that were able to contribute to maintaining the principles and purposes of the United Nations when drafting the Millennium Declaration. This explains the lack of any reference to the new world order, either in the Millennium Summit Declaration or in any other official text. Regrettably, however, this becomes evident in reality, whereby hegemony seems to have the upper hand in the international arena.

Strengthening the role of the United Nations was the main topic on the Summit's agenda. This role would also become clear in reforming the Security

Council and expanding its membership. The United Nations membership considers the Council the Organization's primary organ. This reform process should be accomplished by expanding the Security Council membership, the granting of equitable and fair geographical representation and the gradual phasing out of the use of the right of veto, which contradicts the concept of democracy, particularly when its aim is nothing short of undermining the democratic process.

United Nations peacekeeping operations have contributed to creating conditions conducive to ending the deterioration of security conditions in many countries of the world. Throughout the past years, the Syrian Arab Republic has done everything it could to preserve the security and safety of United Nations peacekeeping personnel and to ensure that they successfully carry out their missions and mandates. But peacekeeping operations must be confined to enforcing United Nations resolutions and those of international legitimacy. The Security Council has therefore to enforce its resolutions so that peacekeeping operations will not simply become operations to impose the status quo, which makes the achievement of true peace a very elusive objective.

The peace process launched in Madrid has been losing its momentum, incentive and compass, day after day and year after year. The Security Council, which has the authority and international legitimacy to enforce its own resolutions, has been kept out of the Middle East peace process. It has become a silent witness to the fact that the peace process in the Middle East has reached a dead end.

It has become quite obvious to all those involved in the peace process, both inside and outside our region, that continued Israeli occupation of Arab territories — which is sometimes explained by Israel's psychological need for security and at other times by superstitious myths — is the major obstacle on the road to peace. Those futile claims, which have no foundation in reality whatsoever, have caused the peace process to become an endless negotiating process with neither end nor resolution in sight.

At any rate, the serious and carefully considered negotiations that Syria has conducted have proven to the international community at large, and to Arabs in particular, two main things: first, that Israel is neither desirous of, nor serious about, pursuing a just and comprehensive peace in accordance with United Nations resolutions; and, secondly, that Syria has the right to a full return of the entire Golan, to the 4 June 1967 line, without concessions or compromises.

We would like to mention another fact known to our foes and friends alike. That fact is that Syria has unreservedly supported every Arab and Palestinian right during every stage of the peace talks. It did not take those positions to embarrass anyone or to negotiate on their behalf. As a matter of principle, Syria has been, and continues to be, committed to the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people to return to their lands, to self-determination, and to establish their independent State on their national soil. On that basis, Syria presented its position clearly and firmly at the meeting of the Jerusalem Committee that was convened in Morocco at the end of last month in support of the rights of Muslims and Arabs to full and uncompromised Palestinian sovereignty over Al-Quds Al-Sharif.

The Arabs are an ancient and time-honoured nation known for its religious tolerance. But tolerance is one thing and conceding one's rights is something else. Territory and sovereignty are matters of national dignity that can never be forfeited or compromised.

At the Millennium Summit, the countries of the world expressed their belief that we live today in an age of international law and under the United Nations Charter, international legitimacy and human rights, and not in an age of the law of the jungle and futile religious claims to justify the usurpation of other peoples' land by force. This requires from the international community and the United Nations a more firm and non-selective stand in defending the Charter and international law and in prompting Israel to respect international legitimacy and international conventions and to implement the resolutions of the United Nations.

The brotherly Lebanese people have achieved a historic milestone, thanks to their solidarity and that of their State, in strongly resisting Israeli occupation. Syria stood by Lebanon firmly in order to ensure the full implementation of resolution 425 (1978). Syria will always stand by Lebanon and support all its national issues, especially the ones concerning the return of all its territory and the return of its hostages held in Israeli jails. In this regard, we urge the donor countries to fulfil their commitments to help Lebanon rebuild what Israel has destroyed, particularly the

damage it caused during its occupation of southern Lebanon.

From this international forum, Syria would like once again to stress the great importance it attaches to maintaining the territorial integrity of Iraq. We call for relieving the suffering of the Iraqi people by lifting the economic sanctions that only affect the people. We also stand against any measures taken against Iraq outside the context of United Nations resolutions so that those resolutions will retain the necessary credibility to bring about their implementation.

We also deem it necessary to find a just and humane solution to the question of Kuwaiti and other prisoners of war, within a practical framework agreed upon between the Kuwaiti and Iraqi sides. We do not want the issue of prisoners of war and missing persons to remain outside the human and political framework that will allow us to arrive at a solution.

Syria also calls upon the Security Council to quickly and permanently lift the sanctions it imposed against Libya. Libya has delivered on all its commitments under Security Council resolutions. We fully support Libya's demands.

In view of the strong, brotherly relations between Syria, the United Arab Emirates and the Islamic Republic of Iran, we call upon the two neighbouring countries to pursue negotiations to resolve peacefully the dispute over the three islands on the basis of the principles of good neighbourliness and mutual respect. Syria believes that the establishment of a trilateral committee to pave the way for direct negotiations between Iran and the United Arab Emirates through the creation of favourable conditions is a practical initiative. We hope that it will allow the two parties to arrive at a satisfactory conclusion.

We would like to welcome the achievements of the representatives of Somalia in forming a temporary Somali parliament and electing Mr. AbdiKassim Salad Hassan as President of democratic Somalia. We consider these achievements as major pillars for the restoration of Somali State institutions. We call upon the international community to redouble its efforts to help Somalis carry out the tasks of reconstruction and rehabilitation.

The continued tragic situation in Afghanistan is a source of great concern to us. We are convinced that the problem of Afghanistan can only be solved by stopping the fighting and beginning negotiations aimed at achieving national reconciliation. It must also be solved by finding an acceptable and permanent political settlement that brings about security and stability for the Afghan people. Many Arab and Islamic countries fear that continued and senseless fighting in Afghanistan may lead to undermining the concept of the State in that country and to destroying its heritage and whatever is left of its historic traditions.

Syria welcomes the discussions convened at the highest level in Pyongyang in June 2000. We express the hope that this rapprochement between the two Koreas will contribute to achieving the aspirations of the Korean people in reunifying the peninsula through peaceful means.

There was a consensus in the statements delivered at the Millennium Summit and in the Summit Declaration about the need to exert all possible efforts to rid humanity of the humiliating and inhumane conditions of extreme poverty, in which more than a billion people live. The Summit stressed the commitment of Member States to basic human rights, as well as to the right of every country to development. We think this will require developing a new economic international order that is just, fair and democratic. It will also require finding a multilateral commercial and financial system characterized by transparency, equality and non-discrimination. We must also find the best mechanism possible to solve developmental problems, especially on the African continent. Such a system should also give preferential treatment to developing countries in order to facilitate investment and the transfer of technology and know-how. That would allow for full, effective and equal participation by the South in the process of decision-making at the international level. Although these requests seem far-fetched now, they will in the final analysis serve all parties and States, whether they be rich or poor, in the North or in the South.

We had fervently hoped that a just and comprehensive peace in the Middle East would have been achieved by the beginning of the twenty-first century and with the ushering in of this new millennium. Nonetheless, we remain optimistic. Peace will remain our strategic choice and that of all peoples who aspire to a bright future in which peace, security and prosperity prevail for human beings everywhere.

The President: As members can see, we are making good progress this morning as far as the list of speakers is concerned, and there will be some time remaining. In view of this, Bosnia and Herzegovina has agreed to be the last speaker at this meeting.

I now give the floor to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Ireland, His Excellency Mr. Brian Cowen.

Mr. Cowen (Ireland): Your election, Sir, as President of the Millennium Assembly is fitting recognition of your great dedication to international peace. Ireland is especially grateful for your outstanding contribution to the Good Friday agreement signed in Belfast in 1998. We are sure that the qualities that you displayed then will serve you well in guiding the work of this session.

Our thanks are due also to Foreign Minister Theo-Ben Gurirab of Namibia, the wise and thoughtful President of the fifty-fourth session of the General Assembly. We are happy also to welcome Tuvalu as a new Member of the Organization.

My colleague, Foreign Minister Védrine of France, has already addressed the Assembly on behalf of the European Union. Ireland is fully associated with his remarks.

The Declaration adopted at the historic Millennium Summit sets out the principles, objectives and targets which should inspire the work of this session. Ireland is fully committed to these principles and objectives, and we are determined to work vigorously to achieve real results. Critics of the United Nations may doubt our ability to achieve such results; we are determined to prove them wrong. Such critics ignore the considerable achievements of the Organization in recent years. Major reform of all aspects of the Organization has resulted in a more efficient, streamlined operation. We will work with others to strengthen the United Nations in order to fulfil the commitment made in the Declaration — to ensure a more effective instrument for pursuing the fight for peace and development and against poverty, ignorance and disease.

The cause of peace transcends all other challenges. Whether in the Middle East, the Western Balkans, Africa or, indeed, in our own island of Ireland, determined efforts to build a secure and durable peace must be tirelessly pursued. Our own experience in Ireland has taught us that there is no greater prize, no more difficult task and no greater satisfaction than to begin to heal the wounds of history and the scars of intolerance.

Our own efforts at building peace have convinced us that to be effective, such efforts require international support and validation. We have also learned that economic development goes hand in hand with building a society with hope in its own future and pledged to overcome the bitterness of the past. It is this experience which helps guide our approach to peace-building in the wider world. It is this experience of peace-building and development which we will bring to the deliberations of the Security Council if elected by the membership in the coming weeks.

Security and development are indivisible and interrelated. Yet too often we in the international community stand aside as hapless witnesses, hesitating to become involved, while the innocent suffer. We need to strengthen the capacity and commitment of the Organization to fulfil its mandates. I therefore strongly welcome the exercise of its authority by the United Nations in East Timor last year and, more recently, in Sierra Leone. It is our duty as Governments to underpin that authority.

We must address those issues which prolong conflict, even when root causes become blurred. Let me give two examples. First, the illicit flow of small arms and light weapons into areas of conflict must be stopped; and secondly, trafficking in high-value commodities, particularly the trade in so-called "blood diamonds", which has exacerbated conflicts in Africa, must be prevented. Carefully targeted, time-limited sanctions will help to counter this menace.

Enhancing the role of the United Nations in peacekeeping is a priority for this session. To broaden that role, we urge an integrated approach combining prevention, settlement and post-conflict peace-building. While the Security Council has a global remit to maintain international peace and security in every region of the world, it is right that it pay special attention at this time to the promotion of durable peace in Africa. We therefore welcome the declared intention of the Security Council at the Millennium Summit to ensure that it plays a more effective role in this urgent and necessary task.

Peacekeeping is at the heart of Ireland's contribution to the United Nations. For more than 40 years we have participated continuously in United

Nations peacekeeping operations. Irish personnel have served under United Nations command in the Middle East, Africa, the Americas, Asia and Europe. We are proud of the contribution which our peacekeepers have made in so many areas of the world. At the same time, we deeply regret that 82 of our Irish soldiers have died in the service of the United Nations. Other Member States have also sustained losses, and I would like to express my deep regret at the brutal attack last week on United Nations personnel in West Timor as well as at the recent outrages in Sierra Leone.

It is because of our own long, and at times frustrating, experience of peacekeeping that Ireland welcomes the publication of the Brahimi report. In the light of this experience, I will focus in particular on three aspects.

First, the United Nations must have the resources and capacity to deliver well-planned and effective peace support operations. The Member States must give the Secretary-General and his staff the means to do the job.

Secondly, if the United Nations is to save lives, it must be capable of deploying into conflict areas rapidly. This requires rapid decision-making.

Thirdly, effective operations depend on well-trained peacekeepers. A more integrated approach must be taken to develop training and equipment of United Nations peacekeeping personnel. Ireland's own United Nations Training School has provided such training to over 170 officers from 40 countries, and we intend to enhance this role in cooperation with like-minded countries.

To those ends, we will contribute actively in this Assembly to the urgent follow-up of the proposals that have been put forward.

Progress in disarmament remains crucially important both to the maintenance of peace and to development. At the sixth Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, very considerable efforts were made by all the States parties to ensure a successful outcome. That reflects the central role of the Treaty in the achievement of a world free of nuclear weapons. The outcome highlights the underlying premise of the Non-Proliferation Treaty: that these weapons do not provide assurances of peace and security. The threat to humanity posed by their continued existence will remain until we achieve an effective and global ban.

There have been welcome and significant reductions by the nuclear-weapon States of their arsenals. But defence strategies based on nuclear weapons continue to include the possible use, even the first use, of those weapons. The Non-Proliferation Treaty is not a charter for the indefinite retention of nuclear weapons by any State. It represents a clear obligation to make nuclear disarmament a reality. At the Review Conference, the parties to the Non-Proliferation Treaty came closer in their common understanding of what is demanded by the Treaty. In that connection, the unequivocal commitment to the total elimination of their nuclear weapons made by the nuclear-weapon States is of fundamental significance.

However, let us not lull ourselves into complacency because we have reached agreement on a programme of action. We now have an opportunity to begin the root-and-branch elimination of these weapons. Progress is primarily dependent on action by the five nuclear-weapon States. States which participate in security arrangements involving nuclear weapons have a particular responsibility to diminish the role of nuclear weapons in security policies. All States share a responsibility to advance negotiation on those measures needed to guarantee a world free of nuclear weapons. For our part, Ireland and our partners in the New Agenda Coalition are determined to work vigorously for the achievement of that goal.

I referred earlier to the role of conventional arms in conflict situations. The ravages and suffering caused by small arms as well as by landmines are immense. We are, at least in the case of landmines, beginning to see positive results from the implementation of the Ottawa Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction. The practical outcome has been the destruction of over 22 million mines by some 50 States; expenditure on mine clearance has more than doubled, and countless lives have been saved.

Next year, the United Nations will focus on small arms with the first international conference specifically addressing that issue. We must set ambitious goals for the conference so that we may have a basis for making genuine inroads on the culture of violence fostered by the dissemination of those weapons.

Peace and development are essential to each other. Without peace, there can be no development. Without development, peace is hard to sustain. Without freedom from the threat of war, from human rights abuse and from famine, there can be no lasting human progress. The elimination of poverty and access to basic health care and education are crucial to sustainable development. Nonetheless, we witness today an unprecedented contrast between the prosperity of developed countries and the poverty of those that have been left behind. And yet, at the same time, we are witnessing an actual decline in the international community's development aid levels. Clearly, that trend must be reversed.

It has long been an objective of Irish Governments to bring our development cooperation effort into line with our national economic growth and to meet the United Nations development cooperation target. Last week our Government took an important step forward by when our Taoiseach, our Prime Minister, Bertie Ahern, speaking at the Millennium Summit, committed Ireland to meet the United Nations target of 0.7 per cent of gross national product by the end of 2007, and to reach the level of 0.45 per cent by the end of 2002. This will clearly represent a significant increase in volume terms. Indeed, in meeting our targets, we anticipate a fourfold increase by Ireland in our aid over the next seven years. That will greatly increase our ability to make a real impact on the lives of some of the poorest people on earth. Our aid budget is both a test and a reflection of our commitment to the values and principles set out in the Millennium Summit Declaration. We shall not fail in this task we have set ourselves as a country: to be an example to all who could contribute more.

As we enter the new millennium, we are faced with several development issues which require immediate attention. We must begin to address the question of debt relief in a more coherent manner. The most heavily indebted countries need a sound basis for the achievement of acceptable levels of growth free from grinding debt. We must recognize that the burden on those States is unsustainable in the face of the challenges of poverty alleviation and AIDS.

Speed is essential in delivering results from the Enhanced Debt Initiative if it is to remain credible. In addition to a European Union contribution of almost $1 billion, Ireland has bilaterally contributed over $40 million in debt relief, although as a matter of principle we have never extended loans in the guise of development assistance. That is why our aid has always been in grant form, and why all of our development aid is also untied.

Greater market access by the least developed countries must be a priority. With the early implementation of the European Union's commitment to grant duty-free and quota-free access to its market by the least developed countries by 2005, a major step in this direction will have been taken.

One of the greatest challenges to development is HIV/AIDS. If the spread of AIDS is to be arrested, we need: strong political will in the leadership of the most affected countries; we need greater international resources; we need greater access to essential drugs at prices that are affordable; and we need more research funds for the development of vaccines. The fight against AIDS is now an integral part of all Irish development activities, with funding budgeted for both prevention and the search for vaccines.

Respect for human rights is central to the maintenance of peace and the promotion of development. It underpins all the activities of the United Nations. Putting weapons in the hands of children and sending them into conflict undermines the most basic rights and the innocence of the child. That is a scandal which cannot be allowed to continue. Through the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflicts, which Ireland was among the first to sign, a start has been made in addressing this issue. But much more must be done.

The establishment of an International Criminal Court offers a unique opportunity to bring to justice the perpetrators of crimes against humanity and other serious violations of international law. Ireland is moving rapidly to ratify the Statute. The international criminal tribunals for former Yugoslavia and for Rwanda demonstrate how necessary it is to exercise international jurisdiction to end the culture of impunity where violations of basic human rights occur.

Racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and intolerance persist in all our societies. The 2001 World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance will provide an opportunity to create a vision for the fight against racism and all intolerance for the coming century. I pay tribute here to the United Nations High Commissioner

for Human Rights, Mary Robinson. Taoiseach Bertie Ahern, TD, our Prime Minister, was pleased to be amongst the first to sign the declaration entitled: "Tolerance and diversity: a vision for the twenty-first century", which was presented at the Millennium Summit. I believe that it will generate a positive approach to the World Conference.

I know that our friends in the international community continue to follow developments in the peace process in Ireland with close interest. Indeed, the Governments of many Member States have played an important and concrete part in the successes we have achieved to date. I am particularly pleased therefore to be able to report that in the past year, in the face of many difficulties, we have made real progress towards the full implementation of the Good Friday Agreement.

The new political institutions are up and working well. In Northern Ireland there is an Executive on which all parts of the community — nationalist, unionist and republican — are represented as of right, and where Ministers are working constructively together to improve the quality of life for all the people. The North/South Ministerial Council, which brings together Ministers from both jurisdictions on the island, and the Implementation Bodies which it oversees, are developing new ways of working together, delivering tangible benefits in areas of mutual importance and interest. In the British-Irish Council, we are forging new relationships, including with the devolved administrations in Scotland and Wales.

We are firmly committed to ensuring that all other aspects of the Agreement are implemented in full.

Policing reform is a vital part of the new dispensation we are striving to create in Northern Ireland. All sides of the community want to see an effective, accountable policing service to which they can give allegiance and which young people, whatever their background, can join. The Agreement promised a new beginning in this area, and the Patten Report set out how it can be achieved. It is now crucially important that the legislative proposals currently before Parliament at Westminster secure that outcome.

The Agreement also contains extensive commitments in the area of human rights, and we are working to ensure that they are delivered. My Government has established an independent Human Rights Commission, with a mandate and remit that surpass the standards set in the Paris Principles. We are in the process of appointing its members. We look forward to the Commission working closely with its counterpart in the North for the protection and promotion of human rights throughout the island of Ireland.

We also need to see continued progress towards security and justice arrangements appropriate to a society in which peace will become the norm, and to see the question of arms resolved for all time. To this end, we have made great strides forward in recent months.

Our task in the peace process has always been more than the putting in place of a new set of institutions and arrangements, important though they undoubtedly are. We are endeavouring to create a new beginning for what has been a deeply divided society, a new beginning where the divisions of the past are overcome. The task which the Irish Government has set itself is to work with others in peace and partnership, and in a spirit of mutual tolerance and respect, building together a better future for all of the people of Ireland. This demands patience, persistence and perseverance. A great deal remains to be done.

Far too many people continue to have their lives blighted by sectarianism and hatred. There are still those who prefer to foster division, retarding rather than advancing the cause of reconciliation. On both sides there are still small groups of dissidents prepared to use violence to bring down the Agreement and to frustrate the democratically expressed wishes of the people. They have nothing to offer, and they will not be allowed to succeed.

In Northern Ireland many people have yet to experience the full benefits of change and the return of hope and normality to their lives. Some remain sceptical about the benefits of the Agreement. But, working together with the British Government and with the representatives of all sides of the community, we will continue to do all in our power to convince them that the Agreement represents not only a balanced and honourable accommodation, but also the only way forward.

The international community has made an important contribution to our achievements to date. Without the support and encouragement of the international community, we could not have come so far. When we embarked on our journey towards peace, we knew that it would take a great deal of time and of

work to see the Agreement implemented in full. We remain firmly committed to the task and take heart from the substantial progress we have made and draw courage from the international community's continued support.

In the course of my statement I have set out my Government's position on the key issues facing the United Nations. It is this approach and commitment that will inform our actions if we are elected to the Security Council. Ireland is standing for election after 20 years absence from the Council. We do so as a small State which has already made a significant contribution to the work of this Organization. Faithful to the principles and purposes of the Charter, we have faced and tried to overcome the legacies of strife and underdevelopment that have marked our own history. Membership of the Security Council will allow us to bring to the service of all the lessons of our own experience, as well as our full commitment to the United Nations.

The Acting President: I give the floor to Her Excellency Ms. Anna Lindh, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Sweden.

Ms. Lindh (Sweden): The individual human being must always be at the centre of our work. Burmese students fighting for democracy, victims of ethnic violence in Kosovo, women in Afghanistan denied their right to education and equality, children dying of curable diseases, people simply trying to survive in the utmost poverty — have given us our task. Meeting the needs of the peoples and realizing their aspirations remain the starting point, the purpose and the vision of our Organization.

But the United Nations will only be what we, its Members, allow it to be. This year's General Assembly session provides an occasion to revitalize our much needed, but often criticized, global Organization. The Secretary-General's excellent report on the role of the United Nations in the twenty-first century provides a firm basis for the creation of a truly modern United Nations — a United Nations with maintained legitimacy and increased credibility, greater efficiency and continued global relevance.

Globalization opens the market for those who have the resources and instruments to benefit from it. Globalization makes knowledge and information available to those who have the tools and skills to make use of the new technology. Globalization brings opportunities to improve life for all people, but it has also led to an increasing gap between those who can take advantage and those left behind.

Safeguarding the universal and indivisible rights and values of humanity is a key responsibility for the United Nations in the age of globalized economy, technology and communications.

The world community has to do its utmost to integrate the least developed countries into the global economy. Solidarity and responsibility from all countries are necessary for reaching international development targets and for contributing to an improved standard of living for all people. Solidarity and responsibility are essential in fighting two of the greatest threats to development and human security in our time: poverty and HIV/AIDS. We need to work with a wide range of measures to overcome these threats.

Sustained and increased official development assistance remains of vital importance. Today only four countries, Sweden among them, meet the United Nations target of 0.7 per cent of gross national income in development aid.

But we must also look at financing for development in a broader perspective. Domestic resources, trade, international finance and official development assistance must all be taken into account. Sweden wants an integrated approach to development. We welcome the fact that the United Nations, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the World Trade Organization (WTO) and others are working together in preparing next year's high-level events on these issues.

The start of new negotiations under the WTO can be an important contribution to growth and development. Let us together make sure that such negotiations truly turn into a development round. The major trading nations have already committed themselves to giving free market access to products from the least developed countries. It is time to put these commitments into effect.

There is no contradiction between development and respect for human rights. On the contrary, development benefits from respect for the human rights and participation of all citizens, and discrimination and oppression are threats to development. For women in many parts of the world, discrimination means being

excluded from participation in the economic and political fields; their potential contribution is lost. Two-thirds of all illiterates are women. For millions of women, domestic violence is a daily reality. This is not in accordance with the basic values of our international community and it is a major obstacle to sustainable development. The legal basis for ending discrimination exists with the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the new agreement of the special session in June.

For the children, next year's special session of the General Assembly provides an excellent opportunity to set a global and concrete agenda. The Convention on the Rights of the Child is the basis for this agenda to reduce forcefully maternal mortality, to give more children access to primary school and to promote the participation of young people in shaping our societies. Girls must be given the same rights and opportunities as boys. I thus welcome the Secretary-General's new system-wide girls' education initiative.

A growing problem in many countries and regions is the traffic in human beings, especially exposing women and children to sexual exploitation and to forced labour. These criminal acts call for our immediate attention and a forceful reaction from the international community. We need and actively seek closer cooperation between Europe, Asia and others in order to develop strong and efficient measures to fight this appalling violation of human rights.

Respect for human dignity requires an end to the use of the death penalty. This brutal and irrevocable form of punishment has no place in a modern, civilized society. It is time for the international community to fully recognize the most fundamental human right and abolish the death penalty.

Disrespect for democracy and human rights paves the way for crisis and conflict. National sovereignty is firmly coupled with a Government's responsibility to protect and promote human rights. It is the duty of the international community and our duty as political leaders to act and react when human rights and fundamental freedoms are violated. We cannot idly stand by when people are being brutalized behind national borders.

In many armed conflicts, deliberate terror directed against civilians is used to create fear. Women suffer from violence and rape. Children are denied their dignity and childhood when forced to become soldiers. Men are imprisoned in concentration camps, forced to take sides or killed. Lives and families are ruined and the perpetrators often go unpunished. Sierra Leone is one example, Kosovo another.

Strengthening international law and humanitarian law does increase the protection of the individual. It also creates confidence amongst people, since it demonstrates that a culture of impunity will not be tolerated. A good example was the decision by the Security Council to set up a special court to try those responsible for war crimes during the conflict in Sierra Leone.

The establishment of an International Criminal Court will give us a safer and more just world. Suspected perpetrators of crimes against humanity can and will be tried in accordance with international law whenever national courts are unable or unwilling to do so. There is a strong need for joint and early action to make the International Criminal Court operational.

The past year saw a new honesty in drawing conclusions from previous mistakes and I want to congratulate the Secretary-General for having initiated the studies of our failures in Bosnia and Rwanda. The lessons learned from the chilling reports on the massacre in Srebrenica and on the genocide in Rwanda, as well as from the senseless terror in East Timor, must be put to constructive use for the future.

National sovereignty must not be used as an excuse to prevent the United Nations from taking necessary measures when fundamental humanitarian values are at stake. It is our common responsibility to make sure that commitments are made and that the resources for peace operations are available when needed. My Government warmly welcomes the recommendations in the Brahimi report, for example concerning core funding for United Nations Headquarters support for peacekeeping operations. By implementing the many recommendations in the report, the United Nations capacity to act will be significantly strengthened.

If the Security Council cannot act in an urgent situation, due to a veto or the threat of a veto, its credibility and its legitimacy suffer. Necessary action ought not to be hindered or blocked by a veto. Now is the time for the permanent members to agree on a moratorium on the use of the veto.

The credibility of the Security Council is of vital interest not only to its members, but to the United Nations membership at large. All efforts should be made to use the Security Council as a forum for negotiations and decisions in order to avoid not only the unnecessary threat of or use of the veto, but also unilateral action whereby the Council is circumvented. A modern United Nations requires a Security Council that reflects the realities of today's international relations. The Council should therefore be enlarged to make room for an increased representation of countries, not least from the developing world. We should also be prepared to periodically review the composition of the Security Council. At stake is the global relevance of the Security Council in a world vastly different from that of 1945.

The recent developments on the Korean peninsula show that long-lasting tension can also be challenged through enlightened statesmanship. But the absence of armed conflict does not equal lasting peace. It is essential to address the root causes of violent conflict by building democracy and safeguarding human rights, by promoting economic and social development and by removing trade barriers and debt burdens.

There is no alternative to the United Nations in preventing and, if needed, managing conflicts. The United Nations provides legitimacy for global action, but the United Nations alone cannot meet the needs and demands in this area. Cooperation between the United Nations and regional entities could be further developed. Sweden believes that the civilian and military capacity for crisis management and conflict prevention now being developed by the European Union (EU) could be put to use in the future by the United Nations. We will continue to work for close cooperation between the EU and the United Nations on these matters during the Swedish presidency of the EU in the spring of 2001.

During the past year, the Security Council has placed emphasis on early action and on the need to focus on the prevention of violent conflicts. Sweden strongly supports this shift towards identifying and taking early measures. We are prepared to work with other countries to support the Secretary-General in the development of a comprehensive conflict prevention strategy.

Improved interaction between the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council, other United Nations bodies and the Bretton Woods institutions, including the use of joint fact-finding missions, will facilitate early action. Sweden would like to see the establishment of a standing fact-finding mechanism at the disposal of the Secretary-General, as a complement to Security Council missions. Such a mechanism could be utilized at an early stage in an emerging crisis situation, without undue delays.

Another part of a United Nations strategy should be to explore and develop the link between democracy and prevention of violent conflict. Democracy offers peaceful ways of handling conflicts and different interests. Democratization is a process in which the holding of elections should only be the first step in a long-term international commitment. Establishing peace and democracy takes a lot more than free and fair elections, even if that is the beginning. The sanctions instrument needs to be refined to become truly effective. By now, we have ample evidence that sweeping economic sanctions frequently do more harm than good. The guiding principle should be to exert the strongest possible pressure on the decision-makers, while no effort should be spared to avoid negative effects on civilians. Every future sanctions regime ought to consist of sharp and enforceable measures, directed against the factors that cause and fuel crisis or conflict. Sweden stands ready to contribute actively to the debate on how this instrument of the United Nations Charter can be made more efficient.

To promote disarmament and prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass-destruction remains a major challenge for the United Nations and its Member States. The result of this year's Review Conference of the Parties to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) gives certain hope in this regard. For the first time in many years, a consensus document on the agenda for nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament was adopted. For the first time ever, the nuclear-weapon States unconditionally pledged to totally eliminate their nuclear arsenals. For the first time, a number of practical steps were identified for how to work towards this goal.

A world free from nuclear weapons will not be achieved overnight. Nor are these steps to be taken in a distant future or held hostage to States' perception of the appropriate strategic balance. The momentum achieved at the NPT Conference has to be sustained. The countries of the New Agenda Coalition will work for the implementation of the NPT results. All States

ought to immediately cease production of nuclear weapons and fissile material for weapons purposes. The Conference on Disarmament should now start its work on a ban on such material. The world community's efforts to prevent the further production of nuclear weapons must not be blocked by China, India, Pakistan or any other State. It is high time to bring the Comprehensive Test-Ban Treaty into force. We expect all States to live up to their commitments.

The United States' plans for a national missile defence system causes concern. In today's globalized world, we must always take account of the global effects of our decisions. It is hard to see how a possible threat, from a few States, would best be countered by a missile shield that may or may not work, and which risks setting off a renewed arms race, with immense costs in terms of wasted resources and loss of human security. The recent announcement by the United States administration to postpone the decision on the national missile defence system was therefore welcome. A more secure world ought to be built on cooperation rather than on isolation and confrontation. The Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty is crucial to global security and must not be jeopardized.

A major cause of concern is also the uncontrolled and destabilizing spread of small arms and light weapons. The international conference on illicit traffic in small arms and light weapons next year will be an important opportunity to address the issue in a comprehensive way. It should result in a concrete action-plan in the global, regional and national context.

The United Nations today is stronger and leaner than three years ago when the Secretary-General launched his reform programme. But there is still work to be done, for example regarding the interplay between the main bodies of the United Nations. We should give the Secretary-General the full authority to act in his leadership role. We support the Secretary-General's proposal for a shorter, more focused agenda for the General Assembly and restructuring of its work. Another main issue for the Millennium Assembly is to reach an agreement on the scales of assessment for the regular United Nations budget and for peacekeeping operations. While it is imperative that all members pay their dues on time, in full and without conditions, Sweden believes that a review of United Nations contributions should be done. The aim however must always be a fairer distribution of the financial burden among Member States, adapted to today's realities, and with capacity to pay as the guiding principle.

The United Nations must not be used as a scapegoat when the real problem is lack of political will or hesitance from us Member States to provide necessary resources. Accordingly, any call for action must be followed by a pledge to provide the personnel or financial means.

The United Nations, with its global character and legitimacy, can make a difference for mankind as well as for the individual. Behind the much used term globalization there are billions of people. They want us to provide hope. They expect us to act responsibly. They need to see concrete results. We are here, representing them, on a mission to make the United Nations a true guardian of human dignity.

The Acting President: I give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Jadranko Prlić, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Mr. Prlić (Bosnia and Herzegovina): At the outset I would like to extend my warmest congratulations to the President on his well-deserved election. I also wish to express our sincere appreciation to His Excellency Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab for his devoted work, tireless efforts and dedication while successfully presiding over the fifty-fourth United Nations General Assembly.

The Millennium Summit that concluded only a few days ago has reaffirmed the unanimous belief of the world leaders that only together, guided by the spirit and the objectives of the founding fathers of the United Nations and respecting the established system of principles, norms and standards of international relations and international law, can we successfully respond to the challenges of the twenty-first century.

Despite its weaknesses, imperfections, inadequate efficiency and sometimes missed opportunities, the consequences of which were partly felt in my country, the United Nations succeeded in maintaining global security, in containing several local and regional conflicts, in preserving peace and in facilitating the normalization of life. It has been successful in offering relief and hope to the most unfortunate ones. Again, my country experienced this side of the United Nations as well. In this respect, we again welcome the Srebrenica Report and subsequent Brahimi Report.

If all this was achieved mostly under the conditions of the confrontations of the cold war, in a climate of mistrust and in the century during which humanity not only achieved the highest objectives but also touched the lowest depths, there should be no doubt that the United Nations can fulfil its new tasks. Addressing this Assembly on behalf of the country that in the memory of humankind is associated with the eruption of the First World War — an event that was an early omen of the entire tragedy of the twentieth century — I would like to express hope that at the very end of this century, after all the horrors of the Second World War and after the inconceivably tragic conflicts following the dissolution of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, Bosnia and Herzegovina has exhausted all the misfortune of being at the epicentre of historic earthquakes. And I hope that, under the auspices of the United Nations, Bosnia and Herzegovina is ready to gain anonymity through a speedy recovery and blessed, long-lasting and happy progress.

The United Nations through its activities has and will continue to influence the developments in the world. It has to follow the rapid and very often radical changes in international relations and to adjust accordingly and find the best ways to exercise its duties and its role. The reform of the United Nations no doubt is a very delicate issue. But its postponement and endless debates that only maintain the status quo are an even greater issue. Furthermore, these things bring into question the ability of the United Nations to modernize and democratize in order to improve its capacity and efficiency. An agreement has been reached on some of the most crucial issues regarding the reform of the Security Council, including the increase in its membership — both its permanent and non-permanent seats — to include the representatives of the developed and the developing countries and to provide more equitable geographical representation of the countries. I believe that by adopting this minimum of initial reforms of the Security Council and through continuous work on the other related issues — such as the issue of the veto — a favourable atmosphere would be created and this would positively influence relations within and all the activities of the United Nations.

In our address to the General Assembly a year ago, our delegation announced that we would like to become a more active member of the international community, primarily of the United Nations. We said that we were determined to move from the position of the recipient of the concern and attention of the international organizations and forums — a position in which we were placed for more or less well-known reasons — to the position of a contributor to international efforts. The fact that we are in a position to consider the need or even the imperative of taking a more active and creative role, and thus a bigger share of responsibility, testifies to the trend of normalization of the situation in our country, which was ravaged by a war only five years ago. Although small in number, an integrated group of 13 policemen from both entities, comprising representatives of all three constituent peoples — who only recently were fighting each other — have been deployed with the international peacekeeping force in East Timor. Furthermore, with significant assistance from and the endorsement of the United Nations Mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina (UNMIBH), efforts to form a joint unit composed of the military from both entities are under way. Once established, the unit would be sent to a peacekeeping mission under the United Nations flag. We are considering very seriously the possibility of presenting the candidature of Bosnia and Herzegovina for a non-permanent seat in the Security Council after the year 2010. In this way, we are confirming our commitment to the stabilization and normalization of life in our country, and particularly our commitment to economic and democratic development. We are confident that, as early as 10 years from now, Bosnia and Herzegovina will succeed in becoming a member of the most important body of the United Nations.

Although we display courage in expressing readiness to take a larger share of responsibility as a Member of the United Nations and of other regional organizations, we are fully aware that we still need the international presence in Bosnia and Herzegovina, that we still need its assistance and support in the normalization of life, in eliminating the consequences of war and in preparing ourselves for self-sustainable development and progress. Implementation of the Dayton/Paris Peace Agreement still remains the main focus of the activities of the authorities in Bosnia and Herzegovina at all levels. Its implementation is also the primary focus of the international community and its representatives in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Imperfect as the Peace Agreement undoubtedly is, this cannot be an excuse for a lack of commitment to its implementation. For it is exactly its consistent implementation that can bring us closer to the point at

which it would be normal, and even unavoidable, to establish a new framework and new directions for Bosnia and Herzegovina's progress towards higher levels of development and higher living standards. However, this will only be possible when the common institutions of Bosnia and Herzegovina become a place and an instrument for the realization of common interests and objectives of both of its entities and of all of its constituent nations and peoples — instead of being a locus for very costly obstructions and confrontations to the detriment of all, in particular those who want to return to their homes.

In many areas throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina in the past 12 months progress has been made. This is encouraging and indicative of the fact that in many fields of life things could advance faster and more successfully along the road towards desired and needed progress.

The return of refugees and internally displaced persons still remains the priority. There continue to be cases in which returnees have to flee their only recently rebuilt homes when faced with brutal attacks by neighbours of different ethnicities or religions. But at the same time it is encouraging that more often the returnees are welcomed by their neighbours and offered assistance and support. During the first six months of this year three times more so-called minority returns were registered compared to the same period last year. However, the number of returns is considered to be even larger, since not all returns have been registered or have not been fully completed as yet. The other positive development noticed in the returns is the fact that among the returnees there are more and more young people and families with school-age children, which was not the case in the past, when only so-called elderly households returned to their homes. This progress, of course, may be the result of improved security conditions, freedom of movement, somewhat better infrastructure or offering assistance with the repairing of houses or apartments; but, above all, this progress is the result of a growing awareness on the part of the citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina that it is savage, illegal and inhuman to deprive people of their sacred rights to home, life and security.

Returns were also significantly increased because indicted war criminals were more successfully brought to justice and because of a more independent, more reasonable and more constructive engagement on the part of the media. Still, the role of the international community in achieving all that has been mentioned — in particular the role of the High Representative, the Peace Implementation Council, the United Nations Mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Stabilization Force, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe — is irreplaceable.

In this context, I would like to take this opportunity to express our gratitude to the members of the Security Council for inviting the three members of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina to New York last November on the occasion of the fourth anniversary of the Dayton/Paris Peace Agreement. That visit resulted in the adoption of the New York Declaration. Implementation of the provisions of the Declaration brought about major achievements: the establishment of the State Border Service, the formation of the Secretariat of the Presidency and improvements that facilitated the functioning of this joint institution, the reconstruction and enlargement of the Council of Ministers, and the creation of conditions conducive to the return of refugees and internally displaced persons. Also, as a related activity, the first steps in organizing the battle against corruption have been taken.

The decision of the Constitutional Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina on the constituency of all the three nations in Bosnia and Herzegovina will have far-reaching consequences for overall developments in Bosnia and Herzegovina. This decision should reduce the unique ethnic and religious apartheid and disenfranchisement of citizens belonging to the so-called minority nations. Among the achievements that encourage and have a positive impact on the change of the overall climate in Bosnia and Herzegovina must be mentioned those made in the area of the judicial system. Those achievements are reflected in the professionalization of judges and prosecutors and in their modernization. Through the establishment of multi-ethnic police comprising uncompromised professionals, training and education of young policemen in police academies, composition of police forces that reflect the demographic picture of the local population, the space for abuses is thereby narrowed, and an environment favourable to arbitrary behaviour and unpunished harassment and oppression of citizens belonging to so called minority nations is eliminated.

It is my pleasure to inform the Assembly that significant efforts are being made in the promotion and

protection of human rights and civil freedoms in Bosnia and Herzegovina in all fields.

In the course of preparing for the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, we will request that government bodies, courts, the police force, schools and universities, non-governmental organizations, religious institutions and their leaders and distinguished individuals from different spheres of life, challenge those who still advocate and practise different forms of discrimination and intolerance and step on human rights, freedoms and human dignity.

We, in Bosnia and Herzegovina, are aware that healing the consequences of war and post-war stagnation and removal of impediments to faster stabilization and progress rests primarily with the domestic political leadership.

We are also aware that the future of Bosnia and Herzegovina is in its integration into European and other institutions. The Stability Pact for south-eastern Europe has therefore been accepted as a framework conducive to regional cooperation, elimination of mistrust, strengthening of security conditions and for catching up with missed opportunities in the spheres of human rights and democratic emancipation and economic progress. Bosnia and Herzegovina wholeheartedly embraces the Stability Pact as the most important regional endeavour so far, convinced that, despite the slow realization of a number of projects and despite the slower inflow of contributions, its objectives are fully consistent with the objectives of Bosnia and Herzegovina's foreign policy. The achievement of these objectives would embark us on the road to faster integration into the Council of Europe, the European Union, the World Trade Organization and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. There is no doubt whatsoever that the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY) should participate in the Stability Pact, but we share the views of those who condition its participation on the necessary democratic changes in that country. At the same time, we consider that the other countries of the region should not be kept hostage by the FRY on their way to Euro-Atlantic integration. In this context, we would like to recall that, at the early stages of the establishment of the European Union, there was no waiting list for the present members of the Union and that they did not have to pass the entering examination successfully and simultaneously. At this point in time, the waiting lists and admission procedures could be counterproductive and could encourage those forces in the region, including in my own country, to persist in continuing the state of chaos and exclusion.

At the beginning of this year, the situation in the neighbouring Republic of Croatia has been significantly improved by the opposition victory in the elections. A number of issues that burdened the relations between the two countries have practically been resolved, since some of the issues were tackled in the bilateral meetings at the highest levels immediately after the elections. The change brought about by the elections also positively influenced the return of refugees, although more visible results in this area are still to come.

However, regrettably, there is still no improvement in relations with the FRY and, at this point, it is still uncertain when the improvement might occur. For sure, without democratic changes in Serbia, the establishment of full diplomatic relations between Bosnia and Herzegovina and the FRY could hardly occur. The democratic changes in the FRY certainly would positively reflect on the internal relations between the two entities of Bosnia and Herzegovina as well as on overall relations in the region. The democratic changes in the Bosnia and Herzegovina neighbourhood have certainly cut off the influx of exported elements of destabilization and crisis. I have already referred to the positive example of changes in Croatia.

We, in Bosnia and Herzegovina, must gather the courage and strength to face our reality and to choose the path and the direction that would lead us speedily towards the achievements that would compensate for the decade of suffering, deprivation and missed opportunities. In the process of making this clear and rational choice, we would like to count on the unreserved support of the international community, and on a rather sooner than later integration into Euro-Atlantic institutions. We have to say that this integration is already very much behind schedule and we do not have a lot of time to waste.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.